

CHAVAN AND THE TROUBLED DECADE

The past decade in India was marked by wars with China and Pakistan, the death of two Prime Ministers, two battles for succession, four General Elections, the great split in the Congress Party preceded by the splits in the Communist and Socialist parties, the ascendancy of extreme rightists and leftists forces, the student unrest, Hindu-Muslim riots, the Naxalite movement and the new economic challenges. A closely documented study of contemporary India, this book of absorbing interest centres round the life of Y.B. Chavan who was the Defence Minister of India from 1962-66, Home Minister from 1966-70 and at present Finance Minister since June 1970.

Chavan has played a crucial role in all these developments and has been in the thick of all the conflicts and controversies. The main source material for this book is Chavan himself who provided authoritative observations during the author's wide ranging interviews with him. The book reveals many hitherto unknown facts and brings together in one volume a faithful picture of contemporary India.

The author, T.V. Kunchi Krishnan, is a well-known political columnist. He has reported the Indian political scene for *Avanti*, the Italian Socialist Daily and has also contributed for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Widely travelled, he participated in a seminar on international affairs held at Harvard.



CHAVAN

and the Troubled Decade

TV Kunhi Krishnan



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Chavan was in the midst of all these conflicts and controversies. He has had his share of the frustrations and failures as well as the achievements of India in her efforts to hold together as a nation and go forward. As Defence Minister from 1962 to 1965 he was linked with the re-organization of India's armed forces after the Sino-Indian war and with India's efforts to meet the Pakistani attack in 1965. As Home Minister from 1966 to 1970 he had a crucial role in safeguarding the federal democratic structure of India and in withstanding divi-

dependence. made the past decade the most bewildering since in- dency of extreme rightist and leftist forces—all this ment and the press but also in courts of law, the ascen- ties, the shrill political controversies not only in Parlia- preceded by splits in the communist and socialist par- gress Party, the split in the once monolithic Congress the disenchantment of the people with the ruling Con- Government to match its promises with performance, munal forces on the political scene, the failure of the general elections, the emergence of religious and com- Nehru, two successions to prime ministership, three wars with China and Pakistan, the death of Jawaharlal against the events of a troubled decade in India. The book is a political study of Y. B. Chavan, set

Preface

sive forces. Indeed, his life and work serve as a binding thread to put together the story of the last decade in India. Another thread, rather feeble in the beginning but a mighty binding force since 1967, is Indira Gandhi. But that in itself is a saga of courage, coolness, and commitment, requiring separate attention.

A chronicler of immediate events is likely to be handicapped, and one who tells of events that are as yet historically incomplete, even more so. Chavan has passed only the mid-point of his career. A later historian, looking back into the clarity of a settled past, might find my assessment of the events and of Chavan's role imperfect. But the handicap is compensated for in some measure by the advantage I had of discussing contemporary history with one of the principal political leaders of the period. I have foraged through the reminiscences of many people and have gathered material from many sources, all of which may not be identified because they are too numerous and some of them like to remain anonymous. The main source material for the book is provided by the observations made by Chavan during his wide-ranging dialogues with me. I am indebted to him for his kindness in allowing me to discuss with him at extempore, taped interviews spread over a period of eleven months many subjects of current importance and for permitting me to use the transcript as I saw fit.

General J. N. Chaudhuri, a former Chief of Army Staff, and S. S. Khera, a former Principal Defence Secretary and Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India, have read parts of the earlier typescript dealing with defence matters and given me the benefit of their experience. Peter Hazelhurst of 'The Times,' London has read the chapters on the split in the Congress Party and given me his reaction. C. P. Ramachandran of 'The Hindustan Times' and Dilip Mukherjee of 'The Times of India' have read the final typescript and made many useful suggestions. I have discussed the book with O. V. Vijayan, the political cartoonist, and Dinkar P. Padukone, my class fellow, who have both read parts of the earlier typescript. My thanks are due to the New Delhi office of 'The Hindu' for permitting me to go through the back numbers of the paper.

I should like to thank M. D. Godbole, private secretary to Chavan, for giving me material on many aspects of Chavan's work as Home Minister and Finance Minister and for going through the script. S. N. Dongre, a member of Chavan's personal staff, gave me the opportunity to go through his extensive collection of press clippings on Chavan. I have received help from these and many others in writing the book, but the responsibility for the opinions expressed in the book and for errors is entirely my own. I like to thank T. R. Venkatachalam for the good work he did in transcribing the tape-recorded interviews with remarkable accuracy and preparing the typescript. I have quoted extensively from the transcript of the interviews and have identified the quotes by prefacing them with the verb 'said' in quotation marks.

T. V. KUNHI KRISHNAN

New Delhi,
August 1, 1971



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I

The Man

The young, impulsive resistance fighter who led a powerful underground movement against the British 'raj' in Satara district in Maharashtra over a quarter of a century ago is now the Finance Minister of India after being successively Defence Minister and Home Minister. Yeshwant Rao Balwantrao Chavan was, however, virtually unknown outside Maharashtra before Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru asked him to become the Defence Minister of India in November 1962 when India faced a serious military threat from China.

The call from Nehru was most dramatic and unexpected. On November 6, 1962 Y. B. Chavan, who was then the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, was in his office in Bombay. His private secretary walked in and announced that the Prime Minister was on the trunk telephone from Delhi and wanted to speak to him.

Nehru said over the phone: "Chavan, is there anybody with you there, in the room?"

Chavan said he had a few visitors.

"Would you mind asking them", said Nehru, "to move out for a while? I have to talk to you in confidence."

After the visitors had left the room, Chavan asked Nehru: "What is it about?"

Nehru said: "I have called you to ask you something important. I want you to tell me."

thinking of getting you over here as Defence Minister. I want to know your views immediately. But, mind you, this is not confirmed. Please do not discuss it with anybody. Are you willing to come?"

Chavan said: "I have not thought over it", and added, "I cannot accept your condition that I should not discuss this with anyone. I have to discuss it with at least one person."

"Who is this person so important?"

"I must discuss it with my wife."

Nehru laughed: "I can understand your mentioning it to your wife. But this is confidential..."

"Whenever and wherever you want me, I will come. But please make sure you want me."

"I want you to come here. I will call you again after a few days."

This was how the call came to Chavan in November 1962 to join Nehru's Cabinet as Defence Minister.

In another national crisis when violence and lawlessness gripped Delhi in November 1966, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asked him to become the Home Minister of India. He had undergone an emergency operation in Bombay for appendicitis on October 16.

Chavan 'said' to the writer: "S. K. Patil¹ came to see me in my apartment in Bombay where I was convalescing. He mentioned to me he had better chances of becoming Home Minister and sought my support." Chavan told Patil that he had been away from Delhi for some days and did not know what was happening, but in any case it was for the Prime Minister to take a decision.² A few days later C. Subramaniam, the Food Minister, telephoned Chavan from Delhi and told him that the Prime Minister wanted him to return to Delhi immediately. Chavan 'said': "Some persons were against my becoming Home Minister. Patil naturally was furious about it. Kamaraj, who was then the Congress presi-

1. Railway Minister and boss of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee.

2. Two months later on January 15, 1967 S. K. Patil told the United Press of India: "People say that I wanted to be the Home Minister in the recent Cabinet reshuffle. On the contrary, I told the Prime Minister that the Home Ministry was not my cup of tea." *The Hindu*, January 16, 1967.

dent, withdrew his initial opposition, and finally I took over the Home portfolio on November 14."

On both these occasions the choice fell on him, because Nehru and Indira Gandhi thought that he was one of the ablest Congress ministers and had the capacity to bring order out of chaos. Indira Gandhi had an additional reason. She and Chavan had ideological differences. He had backed her and helped her to get elected as Prime Minister of India after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in January 1966 and again after the general elections in 1967. There was a great deal of understanding between them and they thought alike on many matters. Indira Gandhi confirmed the close co-operation between them when she replied in January 1966 in the affirmative to a question whether she and Chavan had been allies from the outset.

In spite of their common approach to many issues differences in emphasis arose between them. The conflict of views that occurred between Kamraj and Indira Gandhi towards the end of 1967 made Chavan's position difficult. He said: "I was trying to steer clear of these controversies. My own role, independent role, created problems for me in my relations with the Prime Minister. I could not wholly go along with her in the election of the members of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) at the Hyderabad session of the Congress in 1967."

There were differences in emphasis between him and the Prime Minister over the abolition of the privileges and allowances (commonly known as privy purses) paid by the Government to the former native rulers of India. In 1967 she did not think it was politically necessary to stop the privy purses of the princes but was prepared to abolish their privileges. She felt she was being hurried into taking a hasty step. There were other minor irritants. Divergence of views on India's west Asian policy was one of them. Dillip Mukherjee said in the Statesman that Chavan's disagreement was "on principle ground." The Prime Minister had a discussion with

3. See chapter VI.
4. Michael Brecher, *Succession in India*, p. 214.
5. See Chapter VIII.
6. July 21, 1967.

Ghosh, and S. K. Patil. Chavan also knew of Indira Gandhi's commitment to implement progressive policies and believed that she represented "a new generation, a forward-looking generation." It was, therefore, possible for them to patch up their differences. He announced in September 1969 that "Indira Gandhi is the leader of the nation and I shall follow her. She has given a lead to implement a socialist programme, and as a loyal worker of the Congress, committed to its socialist ideals, I shall strive hard to achieve the goal with the Prime Minister." In June 1970, when Indira Gandhi reshuffled her Cabinet, she persuaded Chavan to take over Finance. He was reluctant to give up the Home portfolio he had held for three and a half years. She is believed to have told him that though she had been in charge of the Finance portfolio for a year, she had not been able to give sufficient time to it and wanted to hand it over to an able person. In an effort to impress on him how much she valued his co-operation and support, she told him that she was angry and deeply hurt by his vote against her candidate for the office of the President and had decided to relieve him of his Cabinet post in July 1969, soon after the Bangalore session of the AICC, but after thinking over the decision, she had changed her mind. She had even prepared the draft of the letter asking Chavan to resign.⁸ She further told Chavan she remembered how he had persuaded her to contest the election for the office of the Prime Minister in 1966 and the able support he had given her.

His continuance in the Cabinet as a powerful minister, as a member of the prestigious Political Affairs Committee⁹ of the Cabinet, and his dominant position in the Congress are a tribute to his dynamic leadership and administrative abilities. His role in the crisis that overtook the Congress Party in 1969 had, however, cast a shadow over him. His critics and even some of his friends had accused him of ambivalence and opportunism.

he disapproved of his attitude towards social and economic policies.

8. From a source which does not like to be identified.

9. The other members of the committee are Indira Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram, the Defence Minister, Swaran Singh, the External Affairs Minister, and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the Food Minister.

tive mind reacted sharply to the squalor and dirt he saw all around, and he smarted under the social and economic injustices of which he himself was a victim. In fact, unlike many of the other leaders of the Indian freedom movement, he did not have a head-start in life and did not begin at a high level. His development from a poor village boy into a powerful leader of the Indian freedom movement has a thoroughly indigenous character. Pictures of him at the age of twenty reveal a slim, awkward youth, with the stamp of rural life on his face. Since then he has changed a great deal. His broad forehead, penetrating eyes, big nose, thick under lip, and receding chin are set in a round face which now gives the impression of power. He has a disarming and captivating smile. "He laughed more easily and more often than any other Indian I have met."¹³

His rough exterior gives no indication whatsoever of his intellectual pursuits and interest in new ideas which have not been deadened by years spent in pouring over musty government files. Chavan's library is lined with books on politics, economics, philosophy, social sciences, and a large number of novels. He has books in his drawing room, in his bed room, in the dining room--in every room. The range of books he reads could be judged from the following titles picked at random: Durants' 'The Story of Civilization,' Ilya Ehrenburg's 'People and Life,' Simone De Beauvoir's 'Force of Circumstance,' John F. Kennedy's 'The Strategy of Peace,' Vladimir Nobokov's 'Lolita,' Gunter Grass's 'The Tin Drum,' Ritchie Calder's 'The Inheritors,' Pierre Teilhard De Chardin's 'The Phenomenon of Man,' Henry Miller's 'Nexus,' Albert Camus's 'The Fall,' Bertrand Russell's 'My Philosophical Development,' Arnold Toynbee's 'History of the World,' Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 'One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,' and Michael Sholokhov's 'And Quiet Flows the Don.' He has many titles of Lawrence Durrell, Norman Mailer, Mary McCarthy, J. D. Salinger, Graham Greene, and C. P. Snow.

In his young days he was a poet and an essayist. He confessed with some hesitation that he used to write poetry and 'added': "I think everybody in his early days is a poet. There is a sort of poetic age, I would

13. Welles Hangen, *After Nehru Who?*, p. 131.

through which everyone passes. Some write, others 't. Some of the poems I wrote were politically motivated." He is an avid reader and reads whenever he can in journeys, during weekends, at night. He 'said': "Every night I read for about an hour something completely unrelated to my official work." He likes to relax but seldom gets the opportunity to do so. He loves children but has no children of his own. His use in Delhi, however, is full of children of all ages—uncles and nephews and grand nieces and grand nephews. His wife, Venujai Chavan, an extremely charming but fully self-effacing person with no interest in politics, had her own share of jail life during the freedom movement. Her main interest now is in managing the Chavan household, which by itself is a big assignment. Chavan has little time for entertainment or recreation. He used to play cards before he became Chief Minister of Bombay and was fond of swimming. His favourite sport is cricket, which he had played as a young lad in the high school at Karad in Satara district. He 'said': "I was fond of cricket. But I found it was a game for rich students, not for one like me, coming from a poor family.... I must confess there is a sort of regret at I could not continue to play the game." In his young days he had to do without not only cricket but even some of the bare necessities of life, despite his mother's great sacrifices to bring up her children. From his mother he acquired the will to struggle and suffer in life. She had undergone many hardships and had to work as domestic help to support Chavan, his two elder brothers, and sister. He 'recalled': "I cannot imagine what sufferings she went through for bringing us up. She did everything for us. Whatever I respect I have for traditions, whatever strength of character I have, all that is good in me—if there is any—I owe them to my mother. She moulded me." His loyalties to his mother, his home, his State are strong. He is attached to the soil from which he springs. His long association with Maharashtra politics—nine years as minister and six years as Chief Minister—had projected him more as a Maharashtrian leader than as a national figure, and his critics have ascribed to him strong provincial feelings. Asked about the extent of his identification with Maharashtra, he 'said' that in

Indian politics, in the days of the freedom movement it did not matter to what province a person belonged. At that time there was a national leadership. He and many others like him were part of the national movement but were not nationally known.

He 'added': "Henceforward, in Indian politics leadership is bound to come only from the State level. I worked in Maharashtra during some of the best years of my life. My work there gave me the occasion to come here. Now, when I am here in Delhi and still hold some strength in my State, I find there is a tendency on the part of some people to identify me with the State and give me a limited image. Naturally, I had my political base in Maharashtra, and no political worker would write off his base. That does not mean I am merely interested in State politics. Whether a person who has come to the Centre from the State—where else can he come from except from one of the States—is parochial or not is to be judged from his performance, his attitude, and approach. One should not have a negative attitude towards other States. Love of one's own State by itself is no disqualification for a national leader, provided he has no prejudices against any other State."

Although Chavan has stronger support at the grass roots than many other national leaders, his attachment towards a federal structure of government, towards socialism and secularism is far greater than that of most other leaders. When senior Congress leaders in Maharashtra pressed for the 'en bloc' resignation of the Congress members of the legislature to force the hands of the Congress high command to create a separate Maharashtra State and when the whole of Maharashtra was in an emotional ferment in 1956, Chavan remarked: "If I have to choose between Nehru and Samyukta Maharashtra, I shall be for Nehru."¹⁴ He thought Nehru's principles of socialism and democracy were far more important than the formation of the linguistic State.

He has been accused of having helped the Shiv Sena, a militant Maharashtrian organization, and of being soft towards the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary communal organization. But the record of his

14. B. B. Kale, *Man of Crisis*, p. 25.

public statements shows that he has been consistent in his opposition to both the Shiv Sena and the RSS. The Shiv Sena, with its slogan "Maharashtra for Marathas", assumed prominence in early 1966. It received encouragement from some Congress leaders in Bombay, but Chavan was the first Congress leader who publicly condemned it. Even before he became Home Minister, he attacked the Shiv Sena at a gathering of three lakh people in Bombay. Referring to this meeting, he said in April 1967 in Parliament: "I made my first statement there, condemning these activities.... I am one of those who believe that whether it is a poor Tamilian or a poor Telugu, a poor Kannadiga or a poor Maratha, their problems are the same. The agony and the pangs of unemployment are the same." He carried his crusade against the Shiv Sena into the heart of Maharashtra and in September 1967 asked an audience in Poona "in the name of God and Maharashtra" not to use the name of Shivaji to promote fascist tendencies. He said the problem of jobs was the problem of poverty and asked: "Have we not divided the country enough? There is division between the haves and the have-nots. Must we now start dividing the poor as south Indian poor and Maharashtra poor?"

Chavan has few fads and no petty loyalties and, like Indira Gandhi, has an utterly contemporary mind which makes use of all the artifices of politics to retain power and pursue his goals relentlessly. His modern mind rejects all divisive tendencies and restrictions that inhibit social and economic growth. He has not rejected Gandhian political virtues as irrelevant, but he does not call himself a Gandhian. He wears 'khadi' but does not know how to work a 'charkha'. His sharp and scientific mind has no use for the neo-Gandhian virtues of abstinence and negation. He has great respect for Gandhi whom curiously enough he never met. He is a product of the latter day freedom movement, of student organisations, and of socialist ideologies. He 'said' - it is strange that I never met Gandhi. I respect him and listened to him. I had seen him in my school hood. He and Shaukat Ali came to my house. His visit is one of the warm memories I have. When he was in Poona, I attended practically every one of his evening prayer meetings. But I never met him.

occasion to meet him. I never wanted to go to him without any purpose. I used to read his articles in 'Young India' and the 'Harijan', which to me were like letters from a father. They made a deep impression on me. The last time I saw him was in Poona."

In spite of the very great respect he had for Gandhi, he did not come under the Mahatma's spell as some of the other Congress leaders did. He does not belong to the generation of politicians who grew up in the spiritualistic ethos of Gandhi. His reverence for the great leader did not prevent him from being critical of Gandhi's policies. Referring to the days when he was in jail in 1932, he 'said': "We were rather critical of Gandhiji and wondered how his movement was going to help us to attain our goal." He has great respect and admiration for Nehru, but he has never been a hero-worshipper. He has contempt for armchair politicians and theorists. He left the Congress Socialist Party because he found that the party consisted of a "group of fashionable people, no doubt people of character, but without any real understanding of the problems of the masses in rural areas." He was later attracted by the radical ideas preached by M. N. Roy, the communist leader. But when he found that Roy's ideas were "too sophisticated to be practical", he parted company with Roy.

He is a lonely man, an individualist at heart, but by conscious effort he has succeeded in submerging his individualism in the collective milieu of politics. Whether he is among the 'jawans' on the battle front or generals at the Army HQ, among heads of States or peasants and workers, he is at ease and establishes immediate rapport with those around. He has many acquaintances but few friends and has not succeeded in building a firm political base in all the States in India. The success of a politician is sometimes measured by the extent of the help and patronage he gives to his friends and supporters. If Chavan is measured by this yard-stick, he is far from successful, for he seldom swerves from what he considers the right path even to help his own supporters. He makes no false promises. Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, the Health Minister of Maharashtra, relates an incident which shows Chavan's adherence to principles even at the risk of losing friends. Dr. Zakaria was a

Congress candidate for a by-election to the Bombay legislative assembly from Bombay city in 1957. He approached Chavan who was then the Chief Minister of Bombay and impressed on him the necessity to cancel the externment order passed on a political worker who Dr. Zakaria thought would enable him to get voters' support. When there was no response from Chavan for a fortnight, Dr. Zakaria met him and renewed the request. Chavan said: "I am sorry, Rafiq, but I cannot help you. I realize that the man would be of great help to us in the by-election. I have spent more than an hour on his file and my conscience does not permit me to cancel the order."¹⁵

He has his principles. But unlike Nehru, he is pragmatic and is not unduly obsessed with the task of matching every little action with ideological concepts. His mind always probes for practical application of ideologies. Referring to his interest in socialism, he said: "We wanted to know exactly what socialism was, what its implications were, what was the social and economic content of it, and more than all, how it fitted into our society, and how it would help us to lead our struggle to success."

His alert mind enables him to think ahead, and he is not lost in ideological quibblings. When the United Front ministry was formed in West Bengal in February 1969 with Ajoy Mukherjee as Chief Minister and Jyoti Basu, the Marxist leader, as deputy Chief Minister in charge of the Home portfolio, Chavan said in Parliament: "I congratulate the United Front for its very good success in Bengal. We wish them well." He added that he hoped the front would remain united and warned parties in the front against becoming "prisoners of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in a couple of years." He further said: "If this prophecy proves wrong I will be happy. But my fear is I am not going to be wrong in this matter." Within a year Ajoy Mukherjee, the Chief Minister, rushed to Delhi for consultation and guidance, and soon after, the United Front broke up. Another long-term assessment he made was about the Shiv Sena. Two years before the general elections in 1971, he predicted that the rightist parties which had

accused him and the Congress of supporting the Shiv Sena, would align themselves with the Shiv Sena to fight against the Congress. On February 2, 1969 he said in Parliament: "...some of the political parties who are now complaining and protesting against the Shiv Sena—I wish my prophecy comes untrue and I am wrong—may probably have a common front, a united front against the Congress...with Bal Thackeray as their leader." Chavan was proved right. In 1971 the Swatantra Party joined hands with the Shiv Sena and unsuccessfully tried to defeat the Congress candidates in the general elections.

He is essentially a man of action and is impatient of inaction and verbiage. He once said that "Congress leaders talk much and do little." He has no illusions about the future of the Congress and has warned the party of the dangers ahead, if the Congress governments in the States and at the Centre are not able to live up to the expectations of the people and fail to carry out the programmes. He warned his party in December 1969 of the grave danger of uprisings among the peasantry in India. "If the present tense relationship between the small and the big farmer is not improved, it could lead to a violent eruption and irreconcilable conflict in which the present green revolution might turn into a red one."

A year later he was more emphatic and forthright in his demand for urgent action to ensure social justice. Inaugurating the fourth convention of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action in Madras in October 1970, he said: "We have to face the truth that the concentration of economic power has increased, that there is a greater measure of wasteful expenditure and ostentatious living by a few, and that the five-year plans have made little or no impact on the conditions of the backward and the traditionally poverty-stricken masses, particularly the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes." He is of the opinion that "the economic strategy for the seventies should include a sound income and wealth policy related to the socio-economic compulsions of a society undergoing total transformation."

Chavan speaks forcefully and his speeches in Parliament and in the Congress forums are listened to with great attention. A general-secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party 'said' in October 1970 that the only

Congress leaders whose speeches in Parliament he not afford to miss were Indira Gandhi and Chavan. As De-putation of being a good parliamentarian. As De- Minister his speeches in Parliament, diffident, lack- confidence, and delivered with laboured diction, uncharitable criticism from the press. He speaks in broken sentences, effective and colourful though they Whatever he says is expressive and commands

Home Minister he flowered into a parliamentarian could cross swords with the best of the speakers in opposition—and indeed, unlike the Government, the sition had many good speakers. Referring to his experience in the Lok Sabha as Home Minister, said: "With a sticky wicket I had to bat against virulent bowlers." However, the sticky situation him the opportunity to establish himself as a good

amentarian. has respect for genuine dissent but is intolerant in Parliament he has burst into bouts of invective, most pointless interruptions. As Home Minister he become the sitting target of all those who wanted cause resentment against the Government. He said: ad to face the Lok Sabha and the country and reply charges for which I was not responsible. I was Home ister during one of the most turbulent periods in political life of free India. Those were years crowd- with political defection and deception, years of ex- nism of the right and the left. I was there to take shocks, often the brickbats, seldom the bouquets. this is part of life—of being accused by interested ies of attitudes and actions one is ignorant of. I k it was my years in the Home Ministry that gave an opportunity to badger me. I have no regrets,

s a political leader he has considerable resilience and icty to meet challenges. He knows how to lie low retreat a little and then jump into action at the moment. He said that even those who less sometimes to withdraw.¹⁶ He has a

paratus to absorb shocks and criticisms. Indeed, he has thrived so far on them. He has made few retreats in his spectacular but steep climb from the poor peasant home in Deorashtra in Sangli to the office of the Finance Minister of India in New Delhi.

The Rebel and Chief Minister

2

Yeshwantrao Balwantrao Chavan was born on March 12, 1914 in Deorashtira (present population 3,000), a small village in Satara district in Maharashtra. The village had a composite population of Hindus and Muslims, and among the Hindus were brahmins as well as other castes and a large number of 'ramoshis,' a kind of backward class, rather proud, militant, and criminally minded." Chavan belonged to a Maratha peasant community which was not considered aristocratic. The amalgam of religions and castes in his village influenced the young boy. He was friendly with people of all the castes and communities and was equally welcome in the homes of 'ramoshis' and Muslims.

Chavan lived with his maternal uncle who was a small farmer. His father, Balwantrao worked as an 'ameen' (court bailiff) at the taluq headquarters at Karad, 30 miles from Deorashtira. One of Chavan's memories of his early life is that of the death of his father, who died of plague when Chavan was about five. He said: "I remember very distinctly how my father came to our village from Karad. He came with fever, walking from the railway station about three miles away. In those days there was no road transport in my area. The road passed through hilly areas. I saw him coming and I went up to him. He said to me, 'Son, don't bother me.

I am not well', and he went inside the house. A few days later he passed away." Another memory of his early days, a pleasant one, is that of 'Sagareswar', the thousand-year old, beautiful temple about a mile and a half from his village. As a young lad Chavan accompanied his mother on her numerous visits to this Shiva temple. There is reason to believe that hundreds of years ago the place belonged to a flourishing kingdom which later became neglected and barren.

Chavan was the youngest of three brothers and a sister. Describing his mother, Vithabai with affection, he 'said': "She was a typical, old peasant woman, and did not have much education—no education at all." Though the family was poor, the mother felt that she should educate her children. She had to make a difficult choice—to stay with her brother at Deorashtra or to move to Karad for the sake of her children's education. Since her husband had worked at Karad and the town offered better facilities for education, she moved there. Chavan 'recalled': "We were a poor family. When father died, mother had nothing to fall back upon, almost nothing. She had a difficult time, bringing up the children and educating them. It was a terrible struggle for her." He received his primary and secondary education in the Tilak High School at Karad. His eldest brother, Gnanoba became an 'ameen' after his father's death. Chavan 'said' that his "second brother, Ganpatrao was closer to me in the sense that I was influenced by him, though he often argued violently with me on political issues." They were brought up in an area which was known in those days for strong anti-brahmin sentiments. Ganpatrao was active in the 'Satya Shodhak' (search for truth) movement which was a protest against brahmin domination and in some ways the counterpart of the Justice Party in Madras.

Young Chavan analysed the aims of the 'Satya Shodhak' movement, its merits, and demerits. He 'said': "When I was at school, I began to ask questions about the various social and political developments. That was the period when the Simon Commission was in India and the whole country was up against it, when political prisoners in jail were on hunger strike." While the Congress Party was lost in the morass of debates about the relative merits of dominion status and complete independence, individuals carried on the fight against the Government

by acts of terrorism. Bhagat Singh, who later became the hero of millions of young Indians, and B. K. Dutta gave a rude shock to the Government when they hurled two bombs on the floor of the Imperial Legislative Assembly in Delhi. Political assassination and arson became frequent in Bengal. Thousands of textile workers were on strike in Bombay. Jute workers in Bengal and railway employees in Madras were also on strike.

Chavan said: "I particularly remember Jatin Das, a Bengali political prisoner, who died in prison after a sixty-one day fast. His death made a deep impact on me. We had been brought up in the atmosphere of strife between brahmins and non-brahmins. But the sacrifice of people like Jatin Das opened my eyes. I saw there were higher causes for which people could die, die a slow death. I wondered why we were involved in petty conflicts. I started reading newspapers—whatever newspapers came to my small town. I wanted to know what was happening to our leaders, Gandhiji and others. By 1930 I was involved in political work."

Gandhi announced in February 1930 that he would disobey the salt law by making salt from sea water. He said he would march from his Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad to the Arabian Sea, a distance of 241 miles, and break the law by preparing salt. On March 12, 1930 Gandhi led 78 hand-picked disciples on this long march to the sea shore and the nation towards revolt against the alien rule.

Chavan was filled with enthusiasm, and the urge in him to rebel manifested itself. He decided to court arrest. This was indeed a big decision for a young village lad to take. He was arrested and kept in the local jail for four weeks. He was not even a matriculate then. His eldest brother, a government servant, feared he might lose his job if his brother carried on his political activities. He told his mother that her young son would bring trouble and disgrace to all of them. "My mother", Chavan said, "had no idea of politics or of the national struggle. When she questioned me about my political work I told her in a fit of emotion that if my activities were troublesome, I would go away from the family. She said she knew I would do nothing wrong and allowed me to do what I thought was right and just."

Chavan was arrested in January 1932 and jailed for fifteen months. He was deeply upset by the erratic progress of the movement. His jail term, however, was very important in his life. He 'said': "I was about nineteen years of age and had some experience of political life. I was a fairly mature political worker. Though I had not sat for any examination—I had already lost two years of studies because of my political activities—I had cultivated the habit of reading. This jail term was for me a sort of college life. Some of the prominent leaders of the Maharashtra political life were with me in the Yeravada jail. One of them was S. M. Joshi. Among the others were Mahajani, who later became the editor of 'Lok Satta', and Acharya Bhagavat, a learned Gandhian. On their suggestion I read many books—books on history, literature, and politics. I read books on socialism.¹ Those fifteen months in jail gave me intense education."

During this jail term Chavan was introduced by Mascarenhas, a jail mate, to the writings of M. N. Roy, the communist leader. Roy exercised a great influence on Chavan. "We had a series of lectures on Mascarenhas told us of what Roy had done and at that time Roy was moving about in Bombay under the assumed name of Dr. Mohammad." Chavan agreed with Roy's theories, and when he came out in 1933, he was full of revolutionary ideas, undefined though they were. In 1934, a year after release from jail, he passed the matriculation examination and joined Rajaram College, Kolhapur—then known as 'the poor man's college'—where he took his B.A. in economics in 1938. Politics, however, was his life, and from 1934 onwards, even when he was in jail, he was involved in active political work. "In 1935," 'confessed' Chavan, "I was never really a student. I attended my college by proxy, being very much occupied in serious political work in my district. When the examination approached, I would prepare for a few days and somehow get through." During his college days, he kept in touch with Roy's ideas. "I met Roy", 'said' Chavan, "in 1937 when he was in Karad. He had come there to do propaganda

Marxian literature and several works of Fabian socialists. He also read Bertrand Russell.

2. The British reluctantly gave India an instalment of constitutional reforms, embodied in the 1935 Government of India Act, which offered a measure of responsible government to the provinces and a loose all-India federation. In the provincial elections held in 1937 under the Act, the Congress won a striking success, by winning 62 per cent of the seats contested by the party.

M. N. Roy said that the war was not an imperialist war. His analysis was that fascism, represented by Nazi Germany and Italy, was an instrument of the capitalist forces against the Soviet socialist. When a split occurred in the capitalist camp and Germany and the Soviet Union joined hands against Poland, Roy said it was an accident, an aberration of history. Chavan

freedom was the first objective." When the second world war broke out in September 1939 he went through a mental crisis. He was a student in the law college in Poona. He said: "I felt the time was ripe for the revolutionary movement in India to march ahead. It was a great moment in the country's life. I remember, when the war was declared, I practically sat through a whole night discussing with friends our future programme of action. The Congress leadership was confused."

a small group working inside the Congress. Chavan felt that Roy's ideas were more towards the left than the amorphous socialist ideas of some of the other leaders. After he met Roy, he lost interest in the programme of the Congress Socialist Party which he felt did not have sufficient appreciation of the problems of the people. "Jaya Prakash Narayan and Dr. Lohia, of course, were different and they enjoyed considerable support from the masses." Under the influence of Roy's ideas, Chavan gave his attention to the social and economic content of independence. "These questions started nagging me and my co-workers, and when we met in conferences, we discussed them. We wanted to know what was to be done about landlords and peasants. But we realized that at that time these were secondary problems. The attainment of political freedom was the first objective."

for the Congress candidate in the 1937 elections." He had come out of jail and the local Congressmen had brought him over there. He stayed in our town for a day, and I moved about with him for two or three days. By that time I had become a Royist. In fact, we were a small group working inside the Congress."

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thought that the prevailing feeling in the country that Britain was India's enemy. Roy wanted India fight against fascism and join hands with Britain, for he believed that ultimately the war would be between fascism and socialism.

Chavan 'said': "It was a rather sophisticated argument for a common man in India and it did not appeal to the masses. I decided that my place was not with Roy. I had a long talk with him in 1939 on his theory of 'accidental war' and finally I told him, that we were not part company. He was sad." After rejecting Congress Socialism and 'Royism', Chavan turned to communism. For a few months, he toyed with the idea of joining Communist Party of India. The Congress did not have a militant programme, and he was unhappy about its inactivity. He went to the office of the communist party in Poona to become a member³ but turned back, because he was not convinced of the soundness of communist ideology but because of the lack of support he received from his co-workers in his district. He therefore, continued to work in the Congress.

The Congress again entered into negotiations with the Government in June 1940 and offered co-operation in the war effort, if Britain would make an unequivocal declaration that India would be given independence as soon as Britain would immediately form an all-party national government. After another round of unsuccessful negotiations with the Viceroy, Gandhi started individual civil disobedience. The objectives were to symbolize the nation's protest against bringing India into the war without her consent and to establish freedom of speech without hurting Britain's war effort. Chavan was elected president of the Satara District Congress Committee and was named 'dictator' of his district in the 1940 individual 'satyagraha'.⁴ He did not appear for his law examination. He 'said' that his education "was an accidental thing and in all respects I was a political animal rather than a student during those days." Vinoba Bhave, one of Gandhi's most devoted disciples, was the first 'satyagrahi'. By April 1941 about 13,000 'satyagrahis' had been convicted all over India. The movement co-

3. See chapter I.

4. A word coined by Gandhi to denote passive resistance.

continued until December 1941. But it was a tame affair with little public enthusiasm. Chavan was involved only at a minimal level, because he disagreed with the basic idea of individual civil disobedience. He took his L.B. degree in 1941 and set up practice as a criminal lawyer at Karad. He 'recalled': "My mother pressed me to get married. But I said before getting married I would like to settle down and have a steady income. I did not want to marry. She pressed me after I had taken my law degree. Her argument was that I was now a lawyer, and I should marry. My wife came from a higher middle class family and she found life in my home completely different."

In 1942 the war was going against the allied nations. Japan conquered Hongkong, the Philippines, and Malaya. On February 15, 1942 Singapore fell. The British were in a tight corner. Britain found that her defences in south Asia were cracking and felt the need to win greater support from India. On March 11 Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, announced in the House of Commons that Stafford Cripps, the British labour leader, would be sent to India with new proposals. The negotiations between Cripps and Indian leaders began on March 25 and ended in failure in 10 days. Bitterness mounted inside the Congress, and the only option before it was mass civil disobedience. The AICC met in Bombay on August 7 in a tense atmosphere. Chavan attended the session. Nehru had all along opposed any violent action to embarrass Britain. But he now felt convinced that direct action was the only answer to the inflexible attitude adopted by Britain. He moved the main resolution on August 7 asking Britain to quit India forthwith. The reaction of the Government was quick. Gandhi and all members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested on the morning of August 9, 1942. As the news of the arrests spread the nation rose in revolt.

On the night of August 9 Chavan was attending a meeting of 300 Congress workers in Bombay. When the news of Gandhi's arrest reached him, he went underground. He organized a powerful resistance movement in Satara, his home district. The Government put a price of Rs. 1,000 for his capture, but he eluded arrest.

for nine months, till May 1943.

Chavan recalled with pride the many acts of individual and mass heroism of those days. He particularly remembered how he was deeply moved when a man who had been with him the night before was shot dead as he held the national flag aloft. "After the firings," he 'said' "we decided this was a waste of manpower and almost amounted to offering ourselves to be killed. We started a no-tax campaign and a non-cooperation movement, a game of hide and seek with the authorities. The no-tax campaign did not succeed. The question of sabotage came up. This was a very serious matter. I used to be in touch with the leaders in Bombay and they encouraged us to conduct raids on railway stations, destroy bridges and railway lines."

He 'added': "Tremendous pressure was put on us by the police, who often encircled villages and looked for underground workers, arrested relatives of political workers and put them in jail. Whenever there was pressure of this nature, we used to escape from the area and come back later. We employed some sort of guerilla tactics, but without arms." Chavan's wife, Venutai was arrested and interrogated for two days in the police lock-up and jailed for two months. She was released when her health broke down. His brother, who was opposed to the Congress movement in the beginning and had worked very hard in the 'Satya Shodhak' movement, was also arrested. Chavan 'said': "My brother gradually saw the logic of my political thinking and he became my supporter. He joined the Congress and later became the president of the town municipality." When he was released from jail, he was suffering from tuberculosis.

"It was indeed a very hard time for my mother. Her eldest son was dead, her second son was in jail, her third son was underground and her daughter-in-law was in jail", 'said' Chavan. "My mother was alone. There was a price on my head and she was told that her son would be shot dead if found." For his wife, going to jail was a strange experience. Her relatives were very unhappy. "They had offered their daughter in marriage to me because I was a promising young lawyer. They never imagined that I would leave her and go underground. After our marriage we were together only for two weeks before I went underground. Her relatives

were upset about her involvement in the political movement. They considered it a grave tragedy." After her release, she was taken to her father's house in Phaltan, near Karad. At the time of her release Chavan was working underground in a village near Poona. "I was old she was about to die. Everyone has his personal weaknesses, and I decided to go and see her." One night he went stealthily to Phaltan and met his wife. So there I was, straying into danger zone. When she saw me she felt better. My intention was to come away the very same night after meeting her. But her relatives said that my wife's condition would improve if I stayed for another day, and they assured me that they would take care of me. I stayed on for a day more. I don't know how it happened, but I was betrayed by someone. The next day the house was surrounded by a police party and I was arrested. They tried to get evidence against me but none could be had. The underground movement was very powerful and nobody would come forward to give evidence. Finally, they prosecuted me for a speech and sentenced me to six months. After the six month period, they kept me on in jail as a detainee. Recalling the activities during the underground days, Chavan said that he and his co-workers distributed anti-government pamphlets, trained recruits for sabotage, and organized clandestine study groups. He admitted it was difficult to keep up popular enthusiasm in the face of harsh police repression. After about ten months there was a lull. The police was on the offensive and the freedom fighters were on the run. He recalled that the police was assisted by big landowners and other vested interests in the villages. The underground leaders in Satara resorted to violence and sabotage. Though Chavan had his qualms of conscience, he was a member of one of the terrorist squads. The new movement led to the formation of (parallel government), the activities of guerrilla warfare. Chavan said: "I cannot take an active role in the 'patri sarkar' began in the latter part of 1942. In fact, I was arrested only by the time I was arrested in the further development of the same carrying on."

State, offered him the office of parliamentary secretary. L. M. Patil, Tapase, and Annasahab Vartak, three members of the Maharashtra Provincial Committee (MPC) were appointed ministers. The MPC was unhappy over Kher's decision to offer Chavan the post of only a parliamentary secretary. Chavan said: "I was offered post on April 1, and was in two minds whether to accept it or not. The Cabinet was sworn in on April 14. I told Kher I wanted to consult my friends before coming to a decision. My friends were not happy, but so elderly persons in my district advised me to accept the post. It took me more than a week to come to a decision. I finally accepted the offer and joined the Cabinet as a parliamentary secretary on April 14, fortnight after the Cabinet was formed."

Chavan became parliamentary secretary to Morarji Desai, the Minister for Home and Revenue. He was the youngest member of the ministerial team and was put in charge of police administration. Desai had worked as deputy collector and sub-divisional magistrate during the British regime. He was an able administrator and he found in Chavan an able lieutenant. He directed that all official papers addressed to him should be routed through Chavan. The young parliamentary secretary had thus the opportunity to learn all aspects of work in the Home department.

In 1948 a crisis occurred in the Congress Party Maharashtra. After Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in January 1948, there was an upsurge of resentment against brahmins. Many brahmin families in rural areas were uprooted, their houses burnt. The resentment against the brahmins stemmed from the fact that Nathuram Godse, the man who killed Gandhi, was a brahmin from Maharashtra. As the parliamentary secretary in charge of the Home department, Chavan had to meet the challenge posed by the communal violence. He said that "it was indeed a rather difficult job." He went to Karad, his home town which had many brahmin families, and ensured that not one of them was hurt. He toured all over the State, denounced the hate campaign against brahmins, and brought under control the violent demonstrations.

One of the results of the rural upheaval was the sentiment of a section of the MPC against the Morarji

Kher combination. Morarji Desai had introduced a new tenancy law which was considered at the time by some Congressmen as a progressive measure, but the general feeling among the peasantry was one of resentment against the administration. The Congress leaders in the rural areas were radical in their outlook and felt that the government's welfare policies were slow and halting and that the administration, largely in the hands of urban-educated gentry, did not have a rural bias. Many important Congress leaders, mostly non-brahmins, left the Congress and organized the Peasants' and Workers' Party. Most of Chavan's friends and associates were among those who worked against the Congress leadership. He 'said': "This non-brahmin dominated group identified itself with rural objectives. I was invited to join the Peasants' and Workers' Party and there was quite a controversy over my attitude. My friends in the new group wondered why I should not leave the Congress and join them. They felt that my whole background made it clear that I had to be with them." He opposed the party.

After the disturbances that followed Gandhi's assassination and the formation of the Peasants' and Workers' Party, the Congress in Maharashtra became weak. The crisis in the Congress gave Chavan an opportunity to "assert himself and establish a dominant position in the party." The young parliamentary secretary was elected secretary of the MPCC. His importance and stature in the party grew. Bhausaheb Hiray, the president of the MPCC, and Chavan, the secretary, were leaders of the rural masses, but both had a national outlook and were opposed to communal politics. They toured all over Maharashtra and explained the Congress ideals to the people. "The question before Maharashtra was whether it should lapse into narrow-minded parochialism or continue its record of sacrifice for the national cause."

In the general elections in 1952 the Peasants' and Workers' Party did not fare well. The Congress was again returned to power. Morarji Desai became the Chief Minister of Bombay. Chavan was included in the Cabinet as Minister of Local Self-Government and Civil Supplies. He was the juniormost minister, and in the Cabinet of nine he ranked number nine. He 'said' of Morarji Desai: "He was a powerful man and a very effective

administrator, but by his rigidity, inflexible attitudes, and assertive manner he failed to win the affection of the masses. There was more respect for him than affection." Bhausaheb Hiray, the MPCC chief and most popular Maharashtrian leader, was the Revenue Minister. When differences arose between Desai and Hiray, Chavan found it difficult to divide his loyalty between the Chief Minister and the chief of the MPCC. After a great deal of tight-rope walking, he abandoned the exercise and gave his full support to Morarji Desai.

As Minister of Civil Supplies, he worked very hard. Bombay State was deficit in food production and a compulsory foodgrains levy was in operation. The absence of adequate and prompt distribution machinery in the deficit pockets was a serious drawback. There was general dissatisfaction and loud clamour by political parties against maldistribution. In 1952 Chavan won popular esteem by lifting the statutory control on prices and movement of foodgrains in the State. After the control was lifted, there was very little work for him as Civil Supplies Minister. He was put in charge of a number of other subjects, including forests, local self-government, and accommodation. Till 1956 he was in charge of these portfolios.

Planning and community development were two other subjects in his care. India had embarked on an era of planned economy, and rural community development projects were initiated throughout the country. The programme of rural development raised new hopes among the people. But the administrative apparatus was not accustomed to the new programme, and the officials in charge of it were diffident and even wondered whether such activities fell within the purview of governmental functions. The official machinery had to be trained, and the people had to be energized for achieving the new objectives. As the minister in charge of community development, Chavan showed initiative and resourcefulness in gearing the governmental machinery for the new tasks. He said: "We had to undertake welfare programmes in the background of a backward economy and general poverty and catch up rapidly with the standard of life which even the industrially advanced countries took a long time to achieve."

He was deeply involved in the controversy over the

agitation for the formation of two separate linguistic States—Maharashtra and Gujarat—out of the Bombay State. Chief Minister Morarji Desai strongly opposed the move and tried to put down the agitation for a separate Maharashtra State with an iron hand. He became unpopular in Bombay for his stout refusal to make any concessions on the issue. Chavan thought a separate State would be in the interests of the people. He agreed with the view that the Marathi-speaking areas in Bombay State should be formed into a separate State and that Bombay city which had a clear Marathi complexion should belong to Maharashtra. But unlike Desai, his stand was not inflexible, and he knew that the claims and demands of Maharashtrians had to be subordinated to the larger interests of the nation. He felt it was foolish to alienate the sympathies of non-Maharashtrians in Bombay city, who accounted for about 45 per cent of the population. Gujaratis, Parsis, Sindhis, and other non-Marathas had made their contribution to make Bombay a prosperous State. The minorities had little political power in Bombay, although they wielded great influence in business and the professions.

The opposition parties in Maharashtra formed a new body, the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti,⁵ to fight for the linguistic State. The Samiti used militant methods. Some of the Congress leaders opposed Chavan's stand and accused him of refusing "to fight the battle of the people." They mounted a vigorous propaganda offensive based on regional sentiments and used the name of Shivaji to whip up the emotions of Maharashtrians. Chavan remained firm and told his opponents that Shivaji was a national figure and it was absurd to identify Shivaji's struggle with one particular region.

In March 1956 the Bombay legislative assembly discussed a bill to reorganize the State. During the debate on the bill, Chavan pleaded for the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra, but pointed out that to use unconstitutional methods to force Parliament to agree to the formation of the State was utterly undemocratic. The Parliament discussed the issue and decided on the formation of a bilingual State with the Marathi-speaking

5. An all-party organization formed to fight for a Marathi-speaking State.

Gujarati-speaking areas in it. After the bill was passed in Parliament and after the bilingual State came into existence, Chavan gave up his efforts for a separate Marathi-speaking State. He said: "The Samyukta Maharashtra movement was a sort of people's movement. I played my own role in it, although it was misunderstood. I was in favour of the formation of Maharashtra State, when political parties took advantage of this movement to weaken the Congress and the nation, I stood against it. I wanted Maharashtra State but not at the cost of weakening the great nation. I also thought that ever we might feel about our own interests, we should accept the verdict of Parliament which was the same."

Chavan, the Chief Minister, had great respect for Chavan's administrative ability and political leadership. When he decided to go to Delhi as a minister in the new Cabinet, he thought Chavan would be the best person to succeed him as Chief Minister of Bombay. He went on to succeed him as Chief Minister of Bombay. He went to Nehru that he had "no hesitation in recommending Shri Y. B. Chavan. About his ability and integrity there can be no doubt." He further said Chavan's loyalty and discipline had been amply demonstrated and that he was the Congress leader most suitable to Gujaratis. In the election to the leadership of the Congress legislature party held on October 1956 Chavan defeated Bhauasahab Hiray, his erstwhile colleague, by an overwhelming majority of 222 votes. In November 1 he became the Chief Minister of the bilingual Bombay State. From the position of the junior-most minister in the previous Cabinet, he became the first one at the young age of 41.

The people were dissatisfied with the bilingual State despite of the efforts of the new Chief Minister to continue them of its advantages. The Samyukta Maharashtra movement came to life again and adopted violent methods for a unitary State. Bombay continued to be in the grip of violence. Chavan said: "It was a very unpopular business, the Chief Minister of the bilingual State. In the general elections in 1957, the Congress lost heavily in Maharashtra, particularly in the

twelve western districts of the State. Many Congress leaders were defeated, because the people were strongly in favour of Samyukta Maharashtra and thought the Congress was against it. It was a very difficult job for me to go against the current."

In the 1957 elections he worked hard to bring the Congress back in power and secured a majority in the legislature. In March 1957 Chavan was again elected leader of the Congress legislature party and became Chief Minister. He soon acquired a complete grip over the affairs of the State and over the party machine. As Chief Minister, his stock went up. He made himself liked rather than feared by his colleagues.

Referring to the days of his chief ministership of the bilingual State, Chavan 'said': "I had many handicaps. The popular will was against me.... I was put to test, but I tried my best to give the State a good administration. I made the Congress popular among the masses and tried to break the strength of the opposition. By 1959 I succeeded in creating goodwill for the Congress in Maharashtra. But it was difficult to carry on. There was opposition from Gujarat side. The services were divided and affected. Political co-operation was not forthcoming and there was a sort of competition between the ministers. I tried to run the administration with objectivity and impartiality so that there would be no complaints from Gujarat side."

The agitation for Samyukta Maharashtra continued to plague Bombay State. Nehru was worried about the situation in Bombay, and when he met Chavan at the AICC session at Hyderabad in 1958, he tried to find out what would be the future of the bilingual experiment. Chavan told him that he was doing his best to make the bilingual State succeed but that his honest feeling was that it would not last. Nehru said he would wait for some time more before making a decision about the future of the State. Chavan told the Prime Minister he would continue his attempt for some more time. He said: "Give me six more months."

In February 1959 Nehru again asked the Chief Minister about the working of the bilingual State. Chavan told him that he was convinced that the bilingual State would not work. "Whether I remained Chief Minister or not, possibly the State might limp on, but without

ch of people's support. I do not find the necessary
 a feeling of frustration." The Prime Minister again
 ked him : "Are you certain you will not be able to
 try on with the bilingual State?" He said : "Honest-
 , yes."

Late in 1959 a meeting to discuss the future of Bom-
 ay was held in Delhi at which Nehru, Morarji Desai,
 ovinid Ballabh Pant, and Chavan were present. Chavan
 onvinced the leaders that in the general elections in
 962, the Congress would not be able to get a majority
 f the assembly seats in Maharashtra, if the demand
 or a separate State were not conceded. His approach
 as that of an astute politician with one eye on the
 ood of the people and another on the future of the
 arty in the State. Nehru and Pant were in favour of
 he division, but Desai was against it. Finally Desai
 old the meeting : "If everyone wants it that way, what
 an I do?"

On May 1, 1960 the new States of Maharashtra and
 Gujarat came into being. The birth of the new States
 led to a series of violent protests and demonstrations
 by groups which were dissatisfied with the terms of the
 bifurcation. Chavan handled the situation with tact. He
 gradually focussed the attention of the people on social
 and economic issues and gave the administration a mass
 orientation. After the formation of the Maharashtra
 State, he became a hero in the eyes of Maharashtrans.
 "Chavan has materialized Shiva's dream of a strong
 and unified state on India's west coast", said a Marathi
 newspaper. "The comparison of Chavan with Shiva's hurt
 both. He felt it was absurd to compare him to the great
 Shiva, for too much idolization and identification of
 Shiva with Maharashtra's glory abridged Shivaji from
 a national to a Maratha hero.

But Chavan was mindful of the interests of the Ma-
 harashtrians as well. His tact in dealing with the
 problems faced by the linguistic minorities in the State
 and his appreciation of the views of the opposition
 in the legislature won him respect. Hence, that
 that "whereas (Morarji) Desai can alienate even his
 fervent admirers, Chavan can disarm the most
 critics" by his courtesy and good nature.
 One of his main contributions was the

of administration. He 'said' that an important aspect of his work was the democratic decentralization of administration. He brought into being the zilla parishads. The zilla parishads (district councils) set up by him in early 1962 were democratically elected district councils with the primary responsibility for all development projects in the district.

The parishads enabled people at the district level to participate directly in the administration and in the development programmes, enabled democracy to work at the grass roots. They have been in existence for the last nine years, and some of their functionaries are now accused of corruption and favouritism. The soundness of the experiment Chavan initiated in Maharashtra and its benefits are not, however, disputed. It has helped to throw up new leadership.

Chavan's popularity and prestige went up. At the Bhavnagar session of the Congress in December 1961, he won more votes than other candidates except Indira Gandhi in the election to the membership of the Congress Working Committee. Even at that time, Chavan had not acquired a national image. But many observers predicted that he would one day occupy a very senior office in Delhi. He had no intention of coming to Delhi. His desire was to consolidate his position and work in Maharashtra until some time in the late sixties. Sadiq Ali, a former general secretary of the AICC, said: "Chavan would not consider going to the Centre for anything less than the Home Ministry." His popularity in Maharashtra was indeed very great and leaders of all opposition parties, all sections of Maharashtrians agreed that he had improved the administration, kept corruption down, and reconciled conflicting interests. Jaya Prakash Narayan called him the best Chief Minister in India.

Chavan was able to raise the prestige of the Congress which had slumped in the elections of 1957. By the time the elections were held in 1962, the Congress had regained its strength in Maharashtra. He 'said': "We came to the legislature in 1962 with a big majority. I had some new ideas, ambitions and plans to take the State forward, to make the administration more popular and purposeful. An Administration Reforms Committee and an Irrigation Commission were appointed. The Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation was brought

into being. In the next five years I was hoping to do my best to make Mahārāshtra a progressive and prosperous State. But all of a sudden I was called away to Delhi."

3

The War with China

Chavan became Defence Minister of India in dramatic and unexpected circumstances in November 1962 when India suffered a serious military defeat in her border war with China. A rapid review of the causes, course, and consequences of the war would reveal the magnitude of the problems he inherited when he took over the Defence portfolio. The origins of India's border dispute with China could be traced to Britain's failure to reach agreement with China on India's northern border.¹ The sequence of events that led to the war in the winter of 1962 began when Indian and Chinese frontier guards clashed in August 1959 at Longju in the North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA).

Thousands of miles away from the NEFA, in Ladakh in the west the Chinese had crossed into India in 1954 and built a road in Aksai Chin (desert of white stones) to the 17,000-foot high Himalayan plateau. About 112 miles out of the total of over 700 miles of the Chinese road was—and is—in Indian territory. The Government of India protested to China in October 1958 about the

1. *The Times*, London, October 8, 1970, in its review of Neville Maxwell's *India's China War*.

2. The Chinese built a second road and a railway spur in Aksai Chin before September 1962.

Chinese encroachment in Ladakh. While Peking and Delhi carried on fruitless negotiations, occasional armed clashes between the border guards of the two countries took place in 1959 and 1960.

Meanwhile, in Ladakh small patrols of Indian forces, assisted by the Intelligence Bureau (IB), moved forward all through 1960 and set up posts. In March 1961 General Thapar became the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Lieutenant General B. M. Kaul, the Chief of General Staff (CGS). Both the officers, particularly Kaul, were responsive to political pressures and the criticisms in the press against the Government's inaction in the face of Chinese advance. But the Army commanders in Ladakh doubted the wisdom of establishing new posts and recommended withdrawal from forward posts to which supplies could not be maintained. On the basis of a report prepared by the IB and the personal pressure exerted by B. N. Mullik, the Director of the IB, Nehru decided at a high-level meeting on November 17, 1961 that Indian forces should fill the gaps along the Sino-Indian border, especially in Ladakh, by setting up forward posts.

This was the beginning of the much-debated "forward policy", strongly advocated by the IB and supported by the External Affairs Ministry. It was based on the assumption that if India did not show firmness by pushing forward, China would advance further into India. The decision to push forward was accepted by Thapar and Kaul, although at that time they had only a sketchy notion of the hazards of implementing the decision. Thapar wrote to the Western and Eastern Commands that "this 'forward policy' shall be carried out without getting involved in a clash with the Chinese unless it becomes necessary in self-defence."³ Mullik, who was present at the crucial meeting in November and at many other meetings in the Defence Ministry, said that "it is wrong to call this policy by the name of 'forward policy' at all."⁴ Krishna Menon in his talks with Indar Malhotra of 'The Statesman' in 1967 said: "I know that some people have said that what has come to be known as India's 'forward policy'... was at least partly responsi-

3. Quoted by Neville Maxwell, *India's China* p. 223.
4. B. N. Mullik, *The Chinese Betrayal*, p. 318.

ble for converting the situation from one of confrontation to that of armed conflict. I think that this is an entirely wrong view. We never followed any forward policy."

Whatever be the name of the policy, Indian forces set up a large number of forward posts in Ladakh to safeguard India's frontiers and moved into forward areas inside India which had remained unoccupied earlier. The objective of the 'forward policy' was to validate India's territorial assertion by establishing an Indian presence in Aksai Chin. In November 1961 Peking asked India "to stop her ruinous and dangerous strategy" and said that if India continued the military probings in Ladakh, "the Chinese government would have every reason to send troops to cross the so-called McMahon Line and enter the vast area between the crest of the Himalayas and their southern foot."⁵ Peking was giving notice to India that if Indian troops advanced further in Ladakh, the Chinese would attack in the NEFA, where Indian defence positions were weaker than those in Ladakh. Chou En-lai made the Chinese intentions clear when he said: "If India sets up posts in the Galwan valley,⁶ Chinese troops would cross the McMahon Line."

China began to build up the defences on her side of the border in the NEFA. Delhi asked Indian troops to move forward as close as possible to the McMahon Line and establish effective control over the area claimed by India. In 1961 and 1962 in both the NEFA in the east and Ladakh in the west, Indian troops set up more forward posts. By mid-1962 India had established 43 new posts in Ladakh. The soundness of the IB-inspired policy of setting up forward posts was doubted by some Army commanders who felt that civil servants and politicians could not appreciate military problems and technologies.

China again protested strongly in 1962 against India's forward move in Ladakh. In mid-September Nehru proposed to Peking joint withdrawal of armed forces behind the borders claimed by India and China and said that pending the settlement of the boundary question, India was prepared to allow China the "continued use of Aksai

5. China's note of November 30, 1961, quoted in India's White Paper, Vol. VI.

6. In Ladakh.

Chin road for Chinese civilian traffic." Peking rejected the offer and asked, "Why should China need to ask India's permission for using its own road on its own territory?...What an absurdity!"⁷ The stage was now set for an armed confrontation between the two countries. On July 21 the Chinese and Indian troops clashed in Ladakh. Peking protested but added: "China is not willing to fight with India, and the Sino-Indian boundary question can be settled only through negotiation." Nehru reacted with a conciliatory move on July 26. After affirming India's right to meet all challenges to its security, he said that India was willing to have further talks with China on the border question. Nehru informed the nation in August 1962 that Indian soldiers had reoccupied about 2,500 square miles of the 12,000 square miles of Indian territory China had occupied. He said that some of the forward posts set up by India were in constant danger of attack by large numbers of Chinese. "Well, it does not matter. We have taken the risk and we have moved forward, and we have effectively stopped their further forward march." The risk mentioned by Nehru was inherent in the forward policy, the soundness of which was doubted by some of the top Army commanders. General Daulat Singh, G.O.C.-in-C Western Command, responsible for the operations in Ladakh, wrote to the Army HQ that "militarily we are in no position to defend what we possess, leave alone force a showdown."⁸ Some of the senior Army officers who were opposed to the setting up of forward posts were downgraded or overlooked for promotion. In the NEFA, at the trijunction of India, China, and Bhutan, the Indian troops established in June 1962 a post named Dholia which "was in a sensitive, disputed area...which the Chinese had more than once refused to concede as Indian territory."⁹ The Indian occupation of Dholia was the detonator in the war. On September 8 the Chinese advanced down the Thag La (pass) ridge which, according to Delhi, was the boundary in the area.

7. Quoted in India's White Paper, Vol. VI.

8. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, p. 254.

9. Brigadier Davi says that "from the Corps Commander down to myself as the Brigade Commander, we had grave reservations about the wisdom of this policy." *Himalayan Blunder*, p. 1.

Encroaching into Indian territory, the Chinese took up positions dominating Dhola. The reaction in India against the Chinese action was swift and vigorous. Political parties, including the communist party, condemned the Chinese encroachment into the NEFA.

Nehru was away in London where he had gone to attend a conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. On September 9 Krishna Menon and his advisers took the vital decision to move forward and capture Thag La. General Thapar, the Chief of Army Staff, stated eight years later that Menon took the decision "in spite of the misgivings which I expressed regarding the Chinese reaction and its consequences."¹⁰ S. S. Khera, the Principal Defence Secretary and Cabinet Secretary, who was present at the meeting, told the writer: "This is not correct. The COAS had no such reservations." In spite of his alleged reservations, Thapar immediately passed on the orders to move to Thag La to the Lucknow-based Eastern Command (Lieutenant-General Sen), which relayed the orders to the Corps Commander (Lieutenant-General Umrao Singh) at Shillong, 600 miles from Lucknow.¹¹ Lieutenant-General Singh informed his superiors on September 12 that he would take immediate action to move forward, but he cautioned that in view of the superior strength of the Chinese and the disadvantages of the Indian troops at high altitudes, it would not be advisable to press forward. The higher command in Delhi was in favour of moving forward immediately, and the Army began preparations to push ahead. 'The Times of India' said on September 23: "The Government of India took the political decision ten days ago to use force, if necessary to throw the Chinese intruders out."

Since Lieutenant-General Umrao Singh had expressed reservations about moving forward, he was shifted from the Command. Menon decided to form a new Corps and appoint a new Commander to direct the operations in the NEFA. Lieutenant-General Kaul was selected by Krishna Menon and appointed the new Corps Commander on Nehru's return from abroad on October 2. The appointment had Nehru's full backing. Kaul was very

10. *The Statesman*, January 9, 1971.

11. After Chavan took over, the unwieldy Eastern Command was split into two, with HQs in Lucknow and in Calcutta.

enthusiastic and saw in the new appointment a further opportunity to climb to the office of COAS. He went to the NEFA front and for the first couple of days sent very optimistic reports. The Indian troops were to take the Thag La ridge on October 10, as per Kaul's plans. Before they could reach the ridge, the Chinese moved down and attacked a forward Indian post. General Kaul, who was present in the area at that time, realized the difficult situation the Indian troops faced—"a task which was far beyond our capacity." He sent a most pessimistic report to Delhi.

On the night of October 11, a hastily-summoned, high-power meeting was held at the Prime Minister's residence to consider the situation in the NEFA. Kaul who had returned to Delhi a few hours earlier gave a depressing account of the clash in which seven Indians were killed. The meeting was inconclusive and Nehru asked the officers to decide about the next move and report to the Government the next day. Generals Thapar and Sen advised the Government that Indian forces should hold on to Dholia and move forward. The next morning, on his way to a three-day visit to Ceylon, Nehru was asked at the Delhi airport by pressmen, soon after he had been briefed by Kaul, whether specific orders had been given to the troops in the NEFA. He replied: "Our instructions are to free our territory.... I cannot fix a date. That is entirely for the Army."

India's critics have pointed out that Peking decided to attack India only after Nehru made the statement at the Delhi airport. The next day, "The New York Herald Tribune" editorial was captioned: "India declares war on China." Neville Maxwell said that Peking seemed to have taken the decision to launch a massive attack on India in mid-October.¹² But he had no evidence to support the view. Russell Brines stated emphatically—also without evidence—that "the decision to attack India was taken in August 1962."¹³ Brigadier Dalvi, from his own observations before the border war started and from his findings subsequently as a prisoner of war, wrote that "the Chinese preparations began in earnest from May 1962" and Peking moved a famous General of Korea

fame to command the Chinese forces in Tibet.¹⁴

The direction of the Indian Army operations against the Chinese was in the hands of Lieutenant-General Kaul. He went back to the NEFA and found that the troops at the front were most unprepared. The Corps Commander was demoralized by the repeated requests of Brigade Commanders for permission to withdraw. He finally asked HQ permission to fall back from Namka Chu. Menon, Thapar, and B. N. Mullik, alarmed by Kaul's request, flew to Tezpur, the Corps HQ. After a detailed discussion, Thapar and Kaul agreed on October 17 that Namka Chu should be held at any cost. Kaul fell ill on October 18 and was evacuated to Delhi. S. S. Khera said to the writer that "Kaul was a sick man mentally and physically after he fell out with Krishna Menon and went off on leave, even before the NEFA operations began."

Even after he fell ill at the front he continued to direct the operations in far away NEFA from his sick bed in his house at 5 York Road, New Delhi by long-distance telephone and WT. On the night of October 19-20 the Chinese crossed the Namka Chu (river) and at 5 in the morning began a massive attack on the small, ill-equipped Indian garrison. Within three hours the unequal contest was over. When the Chinese attack came no one had been appointed as Corps Commander to take the place of Kaul who was sick. Mullik suggested to Thapar on October 22 that a new Corps Commander should be appointed forthwith. Thapar was in two minds about making a change. On October 25, after five fateful days, Major-General Harbaksh Singh was appointed temporary Corps Commander. "In retrospect, I feel that when Kaul fell ill, he should have been immediately replaced and the IV Corps should not have been left without a functioning head at a crucial time. It is possible that the disaster that overtook us on the Namka Chu front might have been averted and at least the rout could have been avoided, if a resolute commander were on the spot."¹⁵

The Chinese developed a three-pronged attack on India and after over-running Indian positions and occupying the

14. Brigadier Dalvi, *Himalayan Blunder*, p. 152.

15. B. N. Mullik, *The Chinese Betrayal*, p. 380.

monastery town of Tawang on October 24, halted for a while and began diplomatic exchanges. In his letter to Nehru on November 2, Chou En-lai accused India of making "active dispositions for a massive military attack." He did not accuse Delhi of launching an attack on Chinese positions, although later he said in his letter to the heads of Afro-Asian governments that India had launched a massive attack all along the border.

Nehru was deeply hurt and upset, but the debacle brought out the stubborn fighter in him. Krishna Menon and the Army commanders, however, were unnerved by the massive Chinese thrust. Krishna Menon said: "The way they (Chinese) are going, there is no limit to where they will go." His critics made a determined effort to remove him. Congress MPs complained on October 23 that Nehru and the nation had been misled by Krishna Menon. The Prime Minister did not agree with them and said it was not the time for a post-mortem and that Menon alone was not responsible for the grave situation. Menon was shocked and grieved by the volume of protest against him and submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister on October 30. The next day Nehru took over the Defence portfolio.

On November 4 and 5 the National Development Council, the highest policy-making body in India, met in Delhi. The Chief Ministers of almost all the States attended the meeting. Nehru called a few of the Chief Ministers to discuss the border conflict with China. K. Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddi, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Pratap Singh Kairon of the Punjab, Biju Patnaik of Orissa, and Chavan met Nehru on the evening of November 4 in the Prime Minister's office in the South Block. The high-level discussion went on late into the night.

Chavan said: "We had realized the strength of the feeling in the country against Krishna Menon, and we told Panditji that although we did not want him to send Krishna Menon out of the Cabinet, as the Prime Minister he could not ignore the feelings of the party and the people." Nehru was at a loss to know what to do. He said to the Chief Ministers: "Menon seems to me to be all right. What has he done? He is in fact head and shoulders above all my other colleagues." About the widespread demand for Menon's removal, he said: "Once we concede the demand and yield in this ma-

they may ask for my resignation tomorrow. Not that I mind it—but how far are we to go?" The general consensus that emerged at the meeting was that whatever decision the Prime Minister took, the Chief Ministers would be with him. But they also told him firmly that he should not make the party more hostile.

Chavan was a friend of Krishna Menon and did not want Menon to be sent out. He 'said': "I was quite close to Krishna Menon in those days. He was one of my good friends. Pandit Nehru knew of my regard for Krishna Menon and also of what I had done for him in the elections in Bombay. Nehru had been frankly worried about Krishna Menon's election and used to ask about his chances. In fact he never asked about the chances of any other candidate. I had assured him that Krishna Menon would get through."

Chavan left for Bombay on November 5, determined to collect more funds for the defence effort and to do all he could to keep the morale of the people high. Nehru and Shastri conferred on November 6 about choosing a new Defence Minister. Their choice fell on Chavan. Soon after, Nehru telephoned to Chavan in Bombay and asked him to become the Defence Minister.¹⁶

A majority of the members of CPP executive met on the night of November 6 at Mahavir Thyagi's (former Minister for Defence Organization) residence at 16 Rajendra Prasad Road and sent Nehru a confidential letter, demanding Menon's resignation. They also agreed among themselves that at the executive committee meeting the next day, they would not get up from their seats when Nehru entered, but would sit with their heads bent down, and would let Thyagi answer Nehru. At the meeting Nehru took serious objection to the letter sent by the members. He defended Menon and offered to resign if the party disapproved of his leadership. Thyagi asked Nehru: "Is this Motilal Nehru's son talking in this strain? There is a crisis on the eastern borders and you want to create an internal crisis by threatening to resign." Thyagi later apologized. When Nehru continued to defend Menon another member of the CPP executive said to Nehru: "It is Menon today. Tomorrow it will be your turn." Nehru was shocked by the mood of the CPP executive. Menon's

16. See chapter I.

esignation was announced the next day. Chavan faced a dilemma. As a loyal Congressman and devoted follower of Nehru, he was willing to accept Nehru's offer of the Defence portfolio. But he did not like to leave Bombay where he had established himself as a powerful and effective Chief Minister. The political climate in New Delhi was new to him. He said: "I mentioned to my wife my talk with the Prime Minister. He was not enthusiastic and did not like to change the pattern of our life and told me Delhi was a rather strange place and I was putting myself in a difficult position. She was also worried about my aged mother and said that as her only surviving son I had to look after her. It was a difficult decision for me to take. If I went to Delhi I would have to leave my mother behind in Bombay.¹⁷ In fact, I was inclined to yield to my wife's enticements."

A few days later Nehru telephoned Chavan again and asked him to go to Delhi. On November 10 he arrived in Delhi and from the airport drove straight to Nehru's residence. Shastri and Nehru were waiting for him. Chavan told Nehru that he was conscious of the honour bestowed on him but explained his personal problems. He also told Nehru that he had no background of military affairs and added that "except my patriotism I have no qualification." He further said it would take him some time to understand the defence problems. Nehru smiled and said: "I understand you, but you will get to know everything soon. I want someone who could give a political leadership. I want you to come." Chavan said he was willing to come but added: "I am staying on in Delhi for the night and propose to go to Bombay tomorrow. I would like you to think it over again and tell me whether you really want me to come. On my way to the airport tomorrow I will contact you again." Nehru said there was nothing more to consider. He told Chavan: "TTK is very angry about the offer I have made to you. 'TTK' (hoob bhare huye the)." (TTK was full of disappointment.) TTK had hoped that he would be offered the

17. His mother never came to Delhi. He set up an apartment for her in Bombay. She died in 1965, at the age of 87.
18. T. T. Krishnamachari who was Minister for Economic and Defence Co-ordination.

Defence portfolio. Nehru hinted to Chavan that Biju Patnaik also hoped to become the Defence Minister and said: "I have thought of everything, and I want you to come."

Chavan had another meeting with Nehru the next day in his house at Teen Murti. Shastri was also present. Nehru was very tense at that moment and asked Chavan: "You have not gone to Bombay yet?.... What is there to think about? I want you to come." That was the end of Chavan's indecision. On November 14 he announced that Chavan would take over Defence.

China mounted a second offensive with six brigades on November 17 and made a massive penetration into the NEFA. The Chinese outflanked the strategic Sela pass and plunged past Bomdi La to the foothills of Assam, threatening Tezpur on the Brahmaputra river. Near the Burma border, the Chinese opened another front and advanced towards Walong. The Indian troops put up a stiff and heroic fight but finally fell back from this area. The Chinese advanced about 40 miles into India.

On November 18 news of the fall of Walong reached Delhi. Nehru declared that what had happened was "very serious and very saddening to us." On November 19 Nehru sent a secret message to President Kennedy, requesting the U.S.A. for air support. The request was "still highly confidential", noted J. K. Galbraith, the U.S. Ambassador, in his 'Ambassador's Journal' on November 19. He added: "These requests, which sought full defensive intervention by our Air Force, were transmitted through the Indian Embassy in Washington."¹⁹ Nehru's request envisaged the protection of Indian cities and industrial areas, particularly in the Gangetic plane, by the U.S. Air Force, so that the Indian Air Force would be free to strike at the Chinese military bases, if Peking started air attacks. There was panic in Delhi. The air was thick with rumours that the Chinese were about to take Tezpur and that a detachment of 500 paratroopers was about to drop on Delhi. It was also rumoured that Lieutenant-General Kaul had been taken prisoner, but this was denied in the evening by President Radhakrishnan who said: "It is, unfortunately, untrue."²⁰

19. p. 486.

20. J. K. Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal*, p. 487.

Some Congress MPs were believed to have asked the President to suspend Parliament, establish some kind of President's rule, and make the Cabinet an advisory body with Nehru as Chief Adviser. Radhakrishnan rejected the proposal as unconstitutional, but according to Neville Maxwell, "the suspicion arose in the Prime Minister's house that Radhakrishnan had not been wholly averse to it."²¹ This was quite untrue though, according to circles which were close to Nehru.

General Thapar returned to New Delhi from Tezpur on November 19 and submitted his resignation to the Prime Minister who was in temporary charge of the Defence portfolio. Nehru discussed the appointment of a successor to Thapar with President Radhakrishnan. The President suggested that General J. N. Chaudhuri be appointed the new Army Chief. The next morning Nehru announced in Parliament that General Thapar had been granted leave on grounds of health and General J. N. Chaudhuri would officiate as Chief of Army Staff. Lieutenant-General Kaul resigned later. According to Nehru, "he resigned very rightly... because the constructive responsibility was his."²²

On the morning of November 20, India had a new Chief of Army Staff and a new Defence Secretary. Chavan who arrived in Delhi in the evening to take over the Defence portfolio was not aware of the details of the swift developments on the border and in the Army HQ in Delhi. He said: "The situation had developed so fast in those two days that I wish I had gone to Delhi earlier. I had been delayed because we had to go through certain democratic processes." From the airport he drove straight to the Prime Minister's residence to meet him. He said: "I saw the Prime Minister was very much worried. But he was full of self confidence. He gave me a resume of what had happened in the past few days, the circumstances under which he had accepted the resignation of General Thapar, and the controversy over Lieutenant-General Kaul. He told me of the

21. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, p. 412

22. Chavan said of Kaul: "I didn't know him. He came to me to explain his position. After I took over I made the recommendation to the Prime Minister to accept his resignation. I thought in his own interest and in the interest of the country it would be best for him to resign."

actual military position in the NEFA. At that time it was expected that the Chinese might come down the foothills of Assam any moment."

After his meeting with Nehru on the border situation, he had a brief talk with Indira Gandhi who was planning to go to Assam. That night he went home²³ "full of forebodings about the future, about his new responsibilities." He had a telephone call from Biju Patnaik at about eleven in the night. Patnaik asked: "Well, Mr. Defence Minister, can I come over and see you?" Patnaik came over and talked to Chavan for about an hour. He gave Chavan advice on many matters concerning defence and military strategy and asked him "But why have you come all the way to Delhi? The Chinese are moving with great speed and possibly Bombay would soon be the war front. You could have remained there." Chavan had not been sworn in and perhaps Patnaik hoped that he might change his mind about becoming Defence Minister. Chavan told Patnaik of his initial reluctance to come to Delhi, but added that he was "now determined to take over Defence and do what I can for the nation at this hour of peril." Patnaik left him around midnight. After the busy schedule of farewells in Bombay and the briefings and consultations in Delhi, he was very tired and, soon after Patnaik left, he went to bed. He was woken up by a telephone call. He 'said': "I wondered who was going to bother me at midnight. The voice at the other end was that of a correspondent from the Press Trust of India. He said there was interesting news which he thought he should break to me. For a moment I thought that the Chinese had made a fresh attack, but the correspondent told me the Chinese had declared a unilateral ceasefire. It was a day of intense drama and anti-climax for me." Nehru and Shastri knew of the ceasefire only in the morning. Chavan was sworn in next day.

The war in the NEFA was a grave disaster for India. In the fighting 1,383 Indians died, 1,696 were missing, and 3,968 were captured.²⁴ No Chinese soldier was taken prisoner by India. New Delhi suffered a grievous blow

23. To Morarji Desai's house where he used to stay whenever he visited Delhi.

24. Defence Ministry's figures, published in 1965.

to its prestige. China accomplished a number of military and political objectives. The Chinese held—and still hold—a dominating position in Aksai Chin from which they did not expect to be dislodged. Their action humbled and discredited Nehru and India and demonstrated China's military might to the world. After the border war India's image as the leader of the non-aligned group of nations suffered abridgement, although India received considerable support from the west and communist countries.

China thought even in mid-October 1962 that the Soviet Union "fully approved of the punitive measures that Peking took on the Indian border." In May 1962 the Soviet Union had agreed to give India supersonic MiG and to build a factory to manufacture them in India. In August the two countries had entered into an agreement, despite the opposition of some Indian Air Force officials. But after the border war began, the Soviet Union informed India that she would not be able to give her the MiG fighters²⁵ as per schedule, not because the Soviet Union approved of China's action but because she did not want to lose China's support at a time when she was engaged in a confrontation with the U.S.A. in Cuba.

Nehru told Parliament more than once that the Soviet Union was pre-occupied with her confrontation with the United States in the Caribbean and that Moscow's attitude towards the war would become clearer after the Caribbean crisis was over. The Soviet communist party is believed to have said in a secret letter to the communist parties of east Europe that the Chinese action against India had deprived them of their best friend in the Government of India, presumably referring to Krishna Menon. The communist leaders in east Europe were not unanimous in their support of Krishna Menon. A few days after the first Chinese offensive, the writer had a long talk in Warsaw with Dr. Julius Katz-Suchy, the well-informed Polish foreign office functionary who was for many years the Polish Ambassador in India and had left the post only six months earlier. He said that he was disappointed by Krishna Menon's performance

25. Kuldeep Nayar, *Between the Lines*, p. 180.

26. Katz-Suchy was retired from service as part of the liberal changes in Poland in 1968.

and did not rate him high as a politician.

Except Albania, which was openly on the side of China, the communist countries were far from sure of their attitude towards India, although the sympathies of the people of these countries were with India. During the war many people in Prague, Warsaw, and Moscow in private talks with the writer expressed support to India. However, some arms—small arms—did go to China from the communist countries. The writer gathered from Prague that Czechoslovakia had shipped arms to China in September and October. But the whole question of arms shipment to China was under examination and the communist countries were waiting for a positive reaction from Moscow.

On October 5 'Pravda', the Soviet communist party newspaper, asked India to accept Peking's terms as the basis for talks for a settlement of the dispute. But on November 5 'Pravda' wrote: "The Soviet people cannot remain indifferent, seeing how the blood of our brothers and friends, the Chinese and the Indian peoples, is flowing", and the paper returned to a position of neutrality in the conflict.

When the Chinese forces advanced, Khrushchev had cautioned China against her action. Some Russians believed that Khrushchev had a hand in the unilateral declaration of the ceasefire by China. He was believed to have put pressure on Peking to come to terms with India during a secret meeting with senior Chinese leaders in the third week of November. He went to an unidentified place, cancelling an appointment he had given to K. P. S. Menon, the former Indian Ambassador in Moscow. Menon told this writer on board the Air India plane which brought them from Moscow to India at the height of the Chinese advance between November 17 and 20 that he had met Khrushchev many times, and in all his years of experience in the Soviet Union not once had Khrushchev cancelled an appointment with him. He did not know why it was cancelled. Victor Zorza, the British expert on Soviet affairs, wrote in the 'Guardian' that a Russian ultimatum might have brought about the ceasefire.

While the war lasted the western world supported India. But this support underwent a sudden change after the ceasefire. The short-lived Indo-American de-

tente ended soon after the Chinese withdrew. Kennedy had written to Nehru pledging U.S. support to India and had said: "Our sympathy in the situation is wholehearted with you." The first consignment of U.S. arms arrived on November 3, even though the formal pact between the two countries was signed only on November 14 with an exchange of letters between Phillips Talbot, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Asia, and B.K. Nehru, the Indian Ambassador in Washington. J. K. Galbraith, the U.S. Ambassador in India, played an important role in arranging to rush U.S. supplies to India. On November 14, Phillips Talbot informed B. K. Nehru that the U.S.A. was prepared to give immediate arms aid to India, but that the Government of India should (1) offer facilities to the U.S. government to observe and review the use of such articles and provide information and (2) later return to the U.S.A. unused articles no longer required.

A day after the ceasefire finding missions arrived in U.S. Assistant Secretary of State headed the American mission led by Duncan Sandys.²⁷ A squadron of 20 American planes also arrived on the same day. The U.S. transport equipment arrived every day, even as a gift. Britain rushed to the Bay of Bengal after the ceasefire. Averell Harriman had rushed to Delhi with Chavions in India needed. Discussions with ministers and meant to assess the extent inconclusive. The Soviet were discussed by these considerable speculation among ment with the Soviet Union

Duncan Sandys²⁸ tried to get information about the agreement from Chavan and others. Chavan was non-committal and replied in cautious monosyllables. Sandys played what he considered was a great diplomatic role at what most Indians thought was an utterly mischievous one. He as well as Harriman tried to pressurize India to come to terms with Pakistan over Kashmir. On his return to London, Sandys said on December 2 that the Soviet Union would not give India MiG planes. When Chavan was questioned by agitated Members of Parliament about Sandys' statement, he said that the agreement with the Soviet Union was principally for building a plant for the manufacture of MiGs in India, and it was also agreed that "a few MiGs would be supplied for training and other purposes, some in December 1962, some in 1963 and some in 1964." Nehru added that he did not know how what Duncan Sandys said could "take away from the authoritative statement made by the Defence Minister."

In spite of all the prevarication, the U.S.A. and Britain were concerned about the Chinese threat to India and sent some quantities of arms. On December 21, U.S. President Kennedy and British Prime Minister Macmillan met in Nassau in the Bahamas and reviewed India's defence needs. The two countries pledged aid for equipping the new mountain divisions India planned to raise. The total amount required for raising six new divisions was Rs. 200 crores, and the assistance received from the Nassau powers in weapons and other materials was only 15 per cent of this amount—about Rs. 30 crores. The six new divisions consisted of four mountain divisions plus two normal infantry divisions, and two border scout battalions from the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand Pradesh. India was to get £20 million from the U.S.A. and £20 million from Britain and other Commonwealth countries. Chavan was sceptical of receiving sufficient arms and equipment from the western countries, although

28. Sandys had visited India in June 1962 to try to stop the MiG deal. A plot was hatched in Washington in mid-June by which Britain was to persuade India to drop the MiG project and accept British supersonic fighters. A large part of the cost of the fighter was to be underwritten by the United States government. But Sandys did not succeed.

“he had fully co-operated with the British and American missions which came to Delhi. He realized that India's defence needs in arms and equipment would have to be met sooner or later by indigenous production.

4

The Defence Minister

The first step Chavan took after he became Defence Minister was to familiarize himself with the situation in the NEFA and Ladakh by visiting the erstwhile war fronts. He 'said': "I went practically to all the fronts—in the NEFA, Kashmir, and Rajasthan borders. I tried to understand their problems, establish some sort of rapport with the men and officers. I went to their training institutions, sat with them, talked with them, ate with them.¹ The confidence of the officers, shaken by a series of incidents earlier, had to be restored. I must admit there was lot of frustration, breakdown of confidence, a sense of humiliation in the rank and file of the armed forces at that time."

He was new to his job and could not make any assessment of India's defence position. Nor could he get any guidance from military strategists in Delhi, who themselves did not know what the Chinese intentions were. Some of the Chinese actions after the ceasefire were incomprehensible to them. The equipment left behind by Indian troops, including American automatic rifles and a Russian helicopter in serviceable condition, was collected, cleaned, inventorized, and returned to India by the Chinese. The Indian strategists were left guessing.

1. Chavan is a tectotaller.

distrust, a mood of general sullenness, seemed to lie like an incubus upon everything and haunted everyone in the Defence Ministry, from Krishna Menon downwards, during the critical period before the crisis of October 1962...."2

The professional competence of the armed forces, of the men and officers, was never in doubt. Even by international norms the calibre and quality of officers like Thimayya, General J. N. Chaudhuri, Admiral Katari, Air Marshal Mukerji, and Air Marshal Arjan Singh were rated high. And yet the atmosphere of witch-hunting that prevailed in the armed forces, particularly in the Army, drove many officers to despair.

Nevertheless, Krishna Menon was responsible for initiating some of the most imaginative projects for strengthening the armed forces. Chavan 'said': "It must be said to the credit of Krishna Menon that he planned many useful projects for the armed forces, including the production of aircraft and tank.... The tank project was a rather long drawnout affair and did not make any progress before I arrived in the ministry." The arrangements for the manufacture of MiG-21, the manufacture of tanks, semi-automatic rifles, and electronic equipment were started by Krishna Menon. But these projects did not make progress, because there was suspicion and lack of proper co-ordination among the persons concerned.

Chavan found to his great relief that while there was rivalry and want of co-ordination in the top echelons of the armed forces, the rank and file were healthy and suffered only from poor leadership. In the first few months his efforts to improve the armed forces met with difficulties, for his own authority was not clearly defined.

Chavan found that his position as the Defence Minister was being compromised. Biju Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Orissa, had also a hand in the affairs of the Defence Ministry. The Government never disclosed the nature of Patnaik's assignment, but it was known later that he was entrusted with the secret mission of organizing guerillas among the Tibetan refugees in India and was also in charge of the Government's counter-coup planning. About Biju Patnaik's assignment, Chavan 'said': "He was working in a special cell. The Prime Minister

did not want to displease him and, therefore, made him some sort of an adviser to me. But Patnaik started showing off."

Biju Patnaik gave the impression and even told some people that he was the real Defence Minister. Chava was annoyed and upset, because Patnaik's actions created many difficult situations for him. He took up the matter with the Prime Minister and told him that he had been called all the way from Bombay and now he felt he was not being given the full status of Defence Minister. Chavan said: "Panditji had a certain fondness for people whom he liked, and Biju Patnaik was one of them. He assured me that I was the Defence Minister and Patnaik was there because he thought he could be of help."

He was pacified for a while. Later he sent Nehru a hand-written letter, asking him what was happening to the Defence Ministry and protesting against the whole structure of the ministry. Chavan's letter surprised Nehru, who called him over and told him: "Patnaik had some ideas and I want to make use of them. But you are the Defence Minister. I want you to forget about this letter." Nehru tore up Chavan's letter of protest.

Soon after Chavan took over, several committees were set up to examine in depth the defence problems. An Emergency Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister and a National Defence Council had been formed earlier. The Council appointed a sub-committee called the Military Affairs Committee on which sat retired Army Chiefs, including General Thimayya and General Thorat. Chavan said: "The purpose of many of these committees was to stimulate thought on defence problems and establish a mechanism for effective public relations for the armed forces which was completely lacking till then." He thought that "the strategy of the defence of a country is never exclusively a military affair but is some sort of a military-cum-political-cum-economic affair." He advocated close co-ordination between industrial units and the armed forces and a greater awareness among the public of the role of the Army.

For the armed forces 1963 was a year of feverish activity. In spite of the increased pace of work, the Defence Ministry could utilize only Rs. 600 crores of the Rs. 800 crores allotted to it. In 1964 the Government

was in a position to take a long-term view of India's defence requirements. The five-year plan, prepared by the Defence Ministry, was to cost Rs. 5,000 crores, an average of Rs. 1,000 crores a year. The plan Chavan placed before the Lok Sabha on March 23, 1964 envisaged 'inter alia' (1) the building up and maintenance of a well-equipped Army with a strength of 825,000 men, (2) the maintenance of a 45-squadron Air Force and improvement of the air defence radar and communication facilities, (3) the addition of submarines and a phased programme of replacement of over-aged ships for the Navy (4) the improvement of road communication in border areas, (5) the strengthening of the defence production base to meet requirements of arms and ammunition and (6) the improvement of the organizational arrangements for provisioning and procurement, storage, training, and economical utilisation of funds.

Chavan's reply in the Lok Sabha in March 1964 to the debate on demands for grants for the Defence Ministry was welcomed by the press and the public. 'The Indian Express' said: "Such details as Mr. Chavan revealed—and he must be commended for taking Parliament and the people more into confidence than his predecessors—show that the Ministry is on the right path. It is facing realistically the requirements of defence." 'The Hindu' wrote that Chavan had broken an irksome precedent when "he gave a much fuller picture of the country's defences than the House has had for many years."³

In the past, personal animosities had prevented the objective scrutiny and assessment of suggestions for the production of new weapons. The abilities and technical skill available in the armed forces had not been put to use, but were wasted "in the effort to delay, defeat and deflect almost every new suggestion." Chavan tried to remove the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and delay in defence production and improve the operational efficiency of the forces. In April 1964 he said that on the question of operational and non-operational men—"the teeth and the tail"—the Government was aware of the need for improvement, and that in the past two years many staff studies on the subject had been undertaken. In the

Indian Army as a whole the teeth accounted for 78 per cent and the tail for 22 per cent. An infantry division in the Army had 83 per cent teeth and 17 per cent tail. A Chinese infantry division, however, had more teeth, 86 per cent against 14 per cent tail. The ratio in Pakistan was 78 per cent and 22 per cent. In Army vehicles India had an edge over China. While a Chinese division had 1,200 vehicles, an Indian division had 1,360.

The Government had ordered an inquiry into the causes of the NEFA disaster. Major-General Henderson-Brooks and Brigadier P. S. Bhagat conducted the inquiry which, according to Chavan, was not "a witch-hunt into the culpabilities of those who were concerned with or took part in this operation" and was not to concern itself with the responsibilities of individuals. The inquiry was meant to determine the deficiencies in (1) training, (2) equipment, (3) system of command, (4) the physical fitness of the troops, and (5) the capacity of the commanders at all levels. The report is a classified document and to this day it is kept a top secret. Chavan made a statement in the Lok Sabha on September 2, 1963 on the findings of the inquiry. He described the report as a "disquieting document."⁴ The inquiry revealed that while the general standard of the junior officers was fair and that of the commanders at the brigade level with odd exceptions adequate, it was at the "higher levels that shortcomings (of command) became more apparent." The higher commanders "did not depend enough on the initiative and the intimate knowledge of the lower commanders of the terrain and troops and interfered with even minute tactical details." The most important aspect of the report was the reference to the failure of the political direction of operations by the Government. Even the largest and the best equipped Army needs proper policy guidance and directives from the government whose instrument it is. These directives should bear a reasonable relation to many

4. When he was asked about the report, Chavan said: "That is still a secret document. As long as the Government wants to treat it as such, I don't think I should say anything more than what I have already said in Parliament."

factors including the size of the Army and the condition of its equipment. It was feared these considerations were not properly weighed by the Government. The Henderson-Brooks report was by no means a white-wash, but it was used by the Government to soften the blow that fell on it. Chavan admitted that "we are not at the end of our trouble, but in the midst of it." He assured Parliament that instructions were given to create a new pattern of relationship between the officers and the 'jawans', consistent with democratic traditions and that promotions would be made on the basis of the quality of leadership. His statement on the inquiry report was the subject of an animated debate in Parliament, in which he faced his baptismal fire as Defence Minister and came out fairly unscathed.

The collection of intelligence, which the Henderson-Brooks report had criticized, came in for sharp attack in many commentators. In 1951 the Government had made the Intelligence Bureau (IB) responsible for the collection of military intelligence. The collection and assessment of operational intelligence continued to be the charge of the Military Intelligence (MI). During Khrushchev's confrontation with China, the MI did not accept any of the reports of the IB. There was a sort of war of nerves between the two intelligence agencies. It continued even after the China war. B. N. Mullik, the Director of the IB, in 'The Chinese Betrayal,' published in 1971, gives a detailed review of the work of the IB. He tries to prove that the IB had done its job well and that the failure was on the part of the MI which did not make good use of his reports. Whatever be the achievements of the IB and the failures of MI, the fact remained that during the war with China, the local commanders in the NEFA and in Ladakh had no proper intelligence reports and were left to fend for themselves. Chavan was ambitious and wanted to make a successful debut in Delhi. He worked very hard to give a new image, a new direction to the armed forces. He had his critics, however, both inside and outside Parliament. Some senior civil servants were not too impressed with him and said that he had brought no new ideas to the defence problems. Another criticism against him was that he was not as self-assured as he should be during parliamentary debates. It took him time to master

Referring to his visit to the U.S.A., Chavan 'said': "The U.S government officials were very solicitous. They felt that while India should certainly build up her defence potential, nothing should be done at the cost of India's economic development. This was a kind of patent argument I heard. The sum total of it all was that the U.S. officials did not want us to have sophisticated planes. Instead of trying to find out what help they could give us, they found reasons for not giving us aid. The emphasis was on negative aspects. The U.S.A. had given F-104 war planes to Pakistan. We had the MiG-21 which was supposed to be a sort of interceptor. But we wanted a plane which could be used both as an interceptor and for ground attack. We went to the Americans with the request that we might be given F-104.

I did not succeed in my effort.... What still remained the stumbling block after nearly two years of negotiations and discussions was the Indian Air Force's re-equipment programme." Both the Boothalingam and Krishnamachari missions had failed to budge the U.S. Government on supersonic fighters. In an attempt to discourage India from getting the jet fighters, the U.S.A. at one stage demanded payment in dollars for the jets. Chavan met Robert McNamara and other influential officials in the U.S. government and forcefully put forward India's case. Phillips Talbot, the Under Secretary of State for Near and Far East, was in charge of his programme. "He was dealing with me all the time. I did not think the man could be of much help to us, but he gave me the impression his government would give us something."

Talbot had been in India as a journalist and was a friend of India. His assessment of the Indian scene was that India was "going down the drain." A few months before the border war, the writer met Talbot through the kind introduction of B. K. Nehru, the popular Indian Ambassador in Washington. "You have come in B. K.'s hearse!"⁶ Talbot said to the writer before settling down to a quiet coffee session at his house in Washington. He said "Your Jawaharlal Nehru is slowly becoming a Madam Chiang Kai-Shek." He had in mind

6. Talbot's reference was to B.K. Nehru's black, hearse-like, British-made car, Austin Princess.

7. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, p. 454.

the disenchantment of Americans with Madam Chiang Kai-Shek, who at one time was held in high esteem and was a frequent and welcome visitor to the U.S.A. but later became unpopular. Talbot thought Nehru's popularity had ebbed and that he was no more considered a great leader by the U.S. government. He asked the writer to take note of the backward position into which India was slipping. When Chavan was informed of Talbot's opinion of Nehru, he said that the U.S. official gave him the impression of "being a friend of India, but was more appreciative of Pakistan...." Talbot's opinion corresponds to the view expressed by President Kennedy, as quoted by his biographer, Schlesinger: "Kennedy's estimation of Nehru has been sharply lowered after Nehru's visit to Washington in November 1961. The President is believed to have said later, 'It was the worst head of state visit' he had and described his conversation with Nehru as like trying to grab something in your hand only to have it turn out to be just fog."

Chavan said he found that U.S.A. was trying "to keep us as much dependent on her as possible and was not happy about our agreement with the Soviet Union for the production of the Mig in India." The U.S. officials asked him how India's backward economy could afford the production of an expensive plane like the Mig. As far as the Navy was concerned, the U.S. had practically nothing to offer to India. "I was told the U.S. Navy was very sophisticated and its equipment will not be of any use to us, and that we could not afford to pay for them." Chavan told the U.S. officials that he was happy to have had the opportunity to visit the U.S.A., but the purpose of his visit was not sight-seeing. "I was rather upset and conveyed my feelings to them." In his talks with U.S. officials, particularly with Dean Rusk, he expressed New Delhi's concern and unhappiness over the manner in which India's request for sophisticated weapons was handled by them.

After his forthright expression of annoyance, "at the last minute, it was decided that I should have a meeting with President Johnson. I was given his message

when I was away in Los Angeles for a week-end." The meeting was fixed for May 28. Chavan was told that the President would then tell him the precise nature of the aid the U.S.A. would give. From Los Angeles he went to Colorado to visit the air academy there. The next day he was to reach Washington. That night at about 2 o'clock he was woken up at his Colorado hotel by a persistent telephone call. "I was rather puzzled. I wondered who was phoning me in Colorado after midnight. When the call persisted I took it. It was from Washington. Phillips Talbot announced the death of Prime Minister Nehru. I told Talbot I must go back

once. He said he had anticipated the request and making arrangements. He also told me that a high official, most probably the Secretary of State, would go to India to attend the funeral by a special plane and I could go with him. They gave me an eight-seater, jet plane, in which I flew all through the rest of night and reached Washington just in time to join in Rusk on the flight to India. My meeting with President Johnson had to be cancelled."

The Americans finally gave India some aid, including equipment for modernizing her communication system. They also said they would "give us some jigs and tools for our defence factory at Ambajhari. Although they agreed to this in 1964, they went back on it in 1965 when war broke out between India and Pakistan. Some of our production programmes were, therefore, delayed and we had to place fresh orders with European countries. These programmes could not be started at all

I left the Defence Ministry.... The military hardware the U.S.A. agreed to give us could have been obtained from other sources and by other methods and did not require negotiations at the level of a minister. Even junior officers could have handled it." He had gone to the U.S.A. with a long shopping list and perhaps expected too much to come out of his visit.

After the discussions at various levels in the U.S.A. and later in India between U.S. Ambassador Chester Connelley and Chavan, the U.S.A. finally agreed to give India (1) immediate credit of 10 million dollars for the purchase of defence articles and services, especially replacement and modernization of plant and equipment in machine tool factories, (2) military assistance during July

1964 to June 1965 at the same level as in the previous year for such items as equipment for mountain divisions, communication, transport aircraft, and road building equipment, all of which to be given in kind, and (3) a further credit of 50 million dollars during 1965-66. Chavan had a long-standing invitation from Marshal Rodin Malinovsky, the Soviet Defence Minister, to visit the Soviet Union. When the Soviet vice-premier Kosygin was in India during Nehru's funeral, the invitation was renewed. Moscow had all along been in touch with the defence requirements of India and had already offered to produce the MiGs in India. Before he left for the Soviet Union, Chavan discussed with Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had become Prime Minister after Nehru's death, his proposals together with the main points for discussion with the Russians. He told Shastri that the U.K. was not willing to give India submarines and that he had information that the Russians were prepared to give them. "As you know, at that time the submarine was a symbol of prestige." He asked the Prime Minister for clearance to negotiate with Moscow for submarines and equipment for the Army and the Air Force. Chavan said: "But Shastri was a little hesitant. He did not want me to commit myself to buy naval equipment from Russia."

He went to the Soviet Union on August 28, 1964 on a two-week visit. The Russians took him on a submarine ride in the Gulf of Finland and showed him other naval centres. He spent a week-end at Yalta in the Crimea and visited Sevastapol, the Black Sea naval base. The Russians wanted to get themselves introduced to the Indian Navy and encouraged India to acquire a Russian submarine. But Chavan's brief was not to make any commitment, and, therefore, he agreed only to take from the Russians some patrol ships. His main discussions were carried on with Malinovsky, the Defence Minister. He also met other Russian officials in charge of economic and industrial ministries.

He recalled his meetings with Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Premier, with warmth. He said: "One of my fond memories is the cordial meetings I had with Khrushchev. I must say he was genuinely friendly to India. He was a very well-informed man, a man who could be brutally frank." Chavan had run into

culties on the terms of the agreement for loans and credit. He wanted easier credit terms, but the Soviet officials stuck to the terms already offered. "When I talked to Khrushchev about this problem", Chavan 'said', "he agreed to reduce the rate of interest immediately." He snapped his fingers to indicate the speed with which Khrushchev agreed to his request. When he later conveyed the Soviet Premier's decision to the Defence Minister, he would not believe it. Malinovsky said: "How can he do this? Let me get this confirmed." Chavan found that the Soviet Premier worked "in a rather unconventional way."

Khrushchev discussed with him not only India's defence needs but also world problems. The Soviet Premier was very unhappy about the hostilities between India and China. Chavan 'said': "Khrushchev thought that Mao Tse-tung was unrealistic and impractical. Referring to Mao, he used the phrase 'a rather swollen-headed man'—at least that was the translation given to us. Khrushchev referred to China's economic programme and to the big leap forward in the 1950s and said Mao thou . . . had reached an advanced stage in the revolution . . . used a very picturesque phrase to describe the . . . ap forward and said, 'You know what happened . . . ? During the big leap, he fell down and hurt . . . tom.' As he went on talking, he suddenly realized that he had talked a lot more than he had intended to do and told me, 'Look, India is my friend and, therefore, I have been very frank with you. But please do not repeat all this, because the Chinese might take undue advantage of it.' Khrushchev was a delightful man, whatever his faults."

Chavan had three meetings with Khrushchev, the last one in the VIP room at the Moscow airport when Khrushchev, Chavan and his wife waited for the arrival of President Radhakrishnan from India on a state visit. Chavan came away with the feeling that the Soviet Union was prepared to come to India's aid without reservations and that in Khrushchev India had a good friend. Soon after he came back to India, he learnt that Khrushchev was no more the Soviet Premier. He 'said': "I was rather upset when he was removed from office in October. I was there in September. I did not get any inkling of the impending change in the prime

Shastri reported to the Cabinet on the 11th of November 1964 between India and the Soviet Union. Shastri was not sure about the effect of the India should take Soviet assistance in the future. Chavan wanted Chavan to go to the U.S.A. The Government visited Britain in November 1964 and after that our government with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister came to power. He said: "The British Government is me to understand that Britain was making a commitment of her own defence problems and was not to make any commitment at that time. I am in discussions with the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary. I also met Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister. I invited Clement Attlee to dinner and we had a long talk. Attlee was in some ways the British architect of India's freedom. Mountbatten was all the time there to help us, but he could not do much." Chavan told Mountbatten that this was the last chance for India to come to an understanding with India for development of the Indian Navy. He said if Britain had to come to New Delhi's help, India would soon be forced to go to the open market for arms and get them from wherever she could. Mountbatten agreed to help, it was not very effective.

It was not very effective. Chavan found the chief of the British navy unresponsive. The issue on which the negotiations broke down as the supply of a second-hand submarine and a second-hand destroyer on credit. The British were not prepared to release even a second-hand vessel, and Chavan had to return with agreements for the purchase of minor things, a frigate, and minor naval equipment. After Chavan came back from the U.K., the Government realized that India would not be able to get all her defence requirements from the U.K. or the U.S.A. and reopened negotiations with the Soviet Union. Moscow agreed to give India, among other things, three squadrons of MiG-21 aircraft, 170 light tanks, and 20 helicopters. The purchases were to be paid for in rupees over ten years at 2 per cent interest. The Soviet Union also gave India two surface-to-air missiles (SAM) to protect major cities. By the middle of 1965 she gave India 12

MiG-21 fighters, comparable in quality to the latest American-built fighters. Soviet assistance was particularly important to India, because Moscow expressed no objection to the use of Russian equipment against China or any other country. Chavan 'said': "The agreement was signed when India's relations with Pakistan were very strained, and it included the supply of submarines to India."

In November 1965 Chavan revealed the final figures of assistance received from the U.S.A., the U.K., and the U.S.S.R. He said between October 1962 and September 1965, the U.S. assistance totalled Rs. 36.13 crores, amounting to 45 per cent of the U.S. commitment. Britain had delivered arms worth Rs. 22.1 crores out of a total commitment of Rs. 36 crores. Soviet assistance to India till the end of 1965 totalled Rs. 100 crores, of which Rs. 60 crores were earmarked for the manufacture of MiG-21 in India.

Chavan's visits abroad in search of arms and the response he received from the countries he visited marked a turning point in India's foreign relations. India was on cordial terms with Moscow even before Chavan became Defence Minister, and Krishna Menon had earlier negotiated the MiG deal with the Soviet Union. And yet Moscow's reaction to the border war with China had left India guessing about Soviet intentions. New Delhi turned towards the U.S.A. and the U.K. for assistance and was prepared to walk into their military orbit, although Nehru had his reservations. But after the war and after the negotiations for long-range assistance from western countries broke down, India took a second look at her relations with the west. The U.S.A. had given a submarine and F-104 supersonic jets to Pakistan. In spite of India's best efforts and two years of sustained negotiations, the western countries would not give India submarines or the jet planes India badly needed. New Delhi edged closer to Moscow out of sheer necessity, out of the conviction that India could not get unconditional and generous defence aid from the U.S.A. and the U.K. Indeed, the U.S.A.'s response, which turned cold and calculating after the flamboyant show of concern during the border war, drove India closer to the Soviet Union.

Threat from Pakistan

It was during the war between India and Pakistan in 1965 that the nation took note of Chavan's qualities as a national leader and able administrator. His years of hard work in the Defence Ministry from 1962 onwards gave India confidence in her military strength to meet the Pakistani aggression in 1965. The support he gave to the officers of the armed forces and the rapport he established with the men gave them the feeling that here was a Defence Minister who was proud of them and would stand by them.

General J. N. Chaudhuri said¹ to the writer: "I felt

there was no subject I could not discuss with Mr. Chavan. At no stage was I apprehensive of asking him anything. He allowed me, within the limits laid down by political and governmental policy, to work on my own without undue interference. I found him sympathetic and anxious to learn at first hand the problems of defence, and he never decried or under-estimated these problems. He also kept a very even hand between the military headquarters and the Ministry of Defence. He did not favour one or the other. He had courage and stood by his decisions even when they were given verbally and informally." The enthusiastic backing Chaudhuri, the Chief of Army Staff, received from Chavan during the Indo-Pakistani conflict

was in sharp contrast to the interference and indifference the Army commanders had to put up with in 1962.

The hostilities between India and Pakistan have a tortuous history, full of suspicion and hatred, religious fanaticism and fear. The extremists in Pakistan had fond dreams of a successful trial of strength with India. In India too, soon after the partition and even later, extremist Hindus had openly expressed the desire to avenge "the wrongs of 1947 and undo partition." Between the two countries there existed an undercurrent of bitterness, bordering on the desire to humble each other. War between India and Pakistan was close during the clash between the two countries over Kashmir in 1947-48. But the intervention of the United Nations and the pressures applied by western countries, particularly Britain and the United States, prevented escalation of the clash into a full scale war in 1948.

Pakistan feared that she was under the constant threat of attack by India. India had received a bigger share (280,000 men) of the pre-partition Indian Army and was militarily stronger than Pakistan. But after the United States, under the inspiration of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, gave massive military aid to Pakistan from 1954 onwards, Pakistanis became confident that India would no longer be able to knock them out. Their fear of attack from India was soon replaced by the desire to attack India. In fact, towards the end of 1950s, it was India who feared that Pakistan might attack her.

Almost every Pakistani, howsoever cultured, sophisticated, and liberal, was suspicious of India. In July 1962 when the writer along with a few friends from Pakistan, Britain, and Poland met U.S. President Kennedy at the White House, the President expressed his pleasure to see the writer next to Jamaluddin Ali, the secretary-general of the Pakistan writers' guild. When the President was told that India and Pakistan had been together for centuries, Ali immediately interjected: "Except that Kashmir divides us." Kashmir became Pakistan's obsession, and all her plans were aimed at annexing it—by force if necessary. The main concern of Indian strategists was, therefore, the possibility of a war with Pakistan. India's defence preparations were based on the belief that the danger of serious military threat to India was only from Pakistan. V. K. Krishna Menon, Defence Minister from

1957 to 1962, over-emphasized the threat and neglected to recognize the other areas of potential danger. Nevertheless, as Menon repeatedly warned the nation, the threat from Pakistan was real.

In spite of the tension in the relations between the two countries, New Delhi was preoccupied with its defence efforts to strengthen the northern borders with China. Even in March 1964, a year and a half after the Chinese attack, the Government was so concerned with the Chinese threat that criticism of the Government's unpreparedness in the face of border incursions by Pakistan began to appear in the press. Krishan Bhatia said in his column in 'The Hindustan Times' that the Government's inaction was of dangerous proportions and pointed out that a party of Pakistani troops had entered twenty miles inside Indian territory at Karen and killed twenty-two members of an Indian patrol. A Pakistani helicopter landed on Indian soil and took off unchallenged. Chavan's valiant declaration that "we will die but not submit to aggression" sounded ironical. He admitted in the Lok Sabha in 1964 that "in the past year and a half, we had taken note of the threat from China more, and we were taking steps to meet that."

Ayub Khan visited Peking in March 1965, two months after his election, and was received with great enthusiasm by Chinese leaders. A border protocol and a cultural pact between Pakistan and China were signed on March 27, 1965 in Rawalpindi. All these were parts of the pattern of Pakistani efforts to isolate India. Besides receiving massive U.S. economic aid, Pakistan had acquired sophisticated weapons from the United States. In 1965 "her entire armed strength depended on the United States, which also supplied an estimated 40 per cent of Pakistan's annual budget."² The pacts with China further improved her military and diplomatic strength and weakened India's position.

Rawalpindi was, however, worried about the military assistance India received from the Soviet Union. In a major diplomatic offensive directed against New Delhi, she befriended the Soviet Union also. India was already friendly with the Soviet Union, and Moscow did not have any objection if Pakistan wanted to walk into its orbit.

Rawalpindi made economic and cultural pacts with the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In 1963 Pakistan had obtained landing facilities for commercial aircraft in Moscow. On April 4, 1965, less than a month after his visit to China, Ayub Khan accompanied by Bhutto went to the Soviet Union on a six-day state visit and received Soviet support for his "independent foreign policy." On August 20, 1965 the Soviet Union agreed to give Pakistan machinery worth Rs. 1.5 crores on credit for improving the civil aviation facilities in Pakistan. Pakistani leaders had the satisfaction that they had established rapport not only with China but also with the Soviet Union and felt that their crusade against India had now better chances of success.

India was not unduly perturbed about Pakistan's ties with the Soviet Union but was worried over the massive American assistance pouring into Pakistan and over her collaboration with China. Some Indian observers feared that the Patton tanks given to Pakistan by the United States were capable of "crashing down the grand trunk road to New Delhi." Long before the Chinese assault, India had begun arming herself to meet a possible attack from Pakistan. And yet New Delhi was wary of Pakistan's diplomatic moves and aggressive military postures.

It became clear to the Government of India early in 1965 that west Pakistan was itching for a fight. In January India discovered that Pakistanis had encroached about a mile and a half into the Indian side on the border in the Rann of Kutch.

After the first series of clashes in the Rann in January, for a couple of months the two countries waged a diplomatic and political war of nerves, with Rawalpindi maintaining the offensive. Pakistan stepped up her pressure on the ceasefire line (CFL) and made many incursions into Kashmir. On April 9 two battalions of Pakistani troops under cover of artillery fire from 25-pounder guns attacked the two companies of the Indian border police at Sardar Post. The police beat back the troops. The Pakistanis attacked again and forced the border police to withdraw. The same day the Indian Army moved in and occupied Sardar Post. For the next fortnight, minor clashes took place in the Rann while the two countries held talks about the disputed territories. On April 14 Pakistani Army in brigade strength, supported by Pat-

ton tanks and 100-pounder guns, launched a four-pronged attack in the Rann. New Delhi said that "an undeclared war is on, along the Kutch-Sind border" and admitted that "Pakistani troops blasted at our defence posts, deep inside Indian territory." India had to withdraw from some of the posts. Chavan said: "The Rann of Kutch incidents worried the Cabinet. We had some reverses." Simultaneous with the new attacks, Pakistan sent proposals to India, suggesting the withdrawal of forces on both sides.

On April 28 Shastri told the Lok Sabha: "If Pakistan continues to discard reason and persists in its aggressive activities, our Army will defend the country, and it will decide its own strategy and the employment of its manpower and equipment in the manner which it deems best." He was warning Pakistan that if she did not halt her aggressive activities in the Rann of Kutch, the Indian Army would not hesitate to strike at any point of its choice along the 800-mile Punjab border. In the meantime Chavan had ordered the Army chief to alert the troops in the Punjab. The Indian Army immediately put into operation its offensive-defensive plan and deployed Indian troops on the Punjab border. Pakistan complained of "the Indian threat of a second front and about India's concentrating forces on the Pakistan border." Britain and America put pressure on New Delhi against India escalating the fighting. Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, made tentative proposals to both the countries to end the dispute.

Shastri, a man of peace, was prepared for an honourable settlement. He did not want to escalate the war. He gave serious consideration to the proposals made by Harold Wilson for a negotiated settlement of the dispute in the Rann. The negotiations made no progress till Shastri and Ayub Khan met in London during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference on June 17. Ayub Khan is reported to have looked at the proposals made by Britain and said: "I cannot understand all this writing; bring me a map." A face-saving solution was reached by the two countries and an agreement signed on June 30, making the ceasefire in the Rann of Kutch operative from July 1. The agreement called for ceasefire, withdrawal of forces and, the setting up of a tribunal to examine the border question. It partly conceded India's

stand. Pakistan had to vacate Kanjarkot. The 'status quo ante' as on January 1 was to be restored. But Pakistan was permitted to patrol some areas of the disputed territory. India lost about 200 sq. miles of territory.

Even while the negotiations for an agreement on the Rann of Kutch dispute were in progress, there were continued violations of the CFL in Kashmir. India reported 339 Pakistani violations in May, a record figure. On May 16, Pakistan violated the CFL near Kargil which overlooks the Srinagar-Leh highway, the main supply route between India and Ladakh. Indian troops crossed the CFL at Kargil on May 17 and occupied three Pakistan observation posts from which Pakistanis were harassing the movement of supplies for Indian troops facing the Chinese in Ladakh. India justified the occupation of the posts on the plea that Pakistani incursions had blockaded the route which had to be kept open at all costs for communications with Leh. Pakistan protested to the United Nations. India withdrew from the three posts in June after receiving assurance from the U.N. observers that the road would be kept free from incursions and protected for Indian traffic to Leh. After India withdrew, Pakistan again violated the CFL at Kargil. Rawalpindi later listed the Indian occupation of Kargil on May 17 as one of the evidences of India's aggression and India's aggression and as an immediate cause of the war.

In June 1965 the late General R. H. Nimmo, the chief U.N. military observer in Kashmir, said he had received 2,239 complaints of ceasefire violations from both sides since January. Quoting Nimmo's report U Thant, Secretary-General of the U.N., said that "377 violations in all categories were confirmed, 218 of which were committed by Pakistan and 159 by India." India's quick and sharp responses to Pakistan's incursions along the CFL gladdened Indian public opinion, which hailed the alertness of the armed forces. Chavan was of the opinion that unless India was able to go forward and meet the threat, Pakistan would not be restrained from further incursions. India's response also indicated the new military thinking which was in favour of immediate reaction without being weighed down by political considerations.

Pakistan's ambitions, however, could not be contained by India's prompt response to her military probes on the

declare Kashmir an independent country.

3. *Morning News*, August 10, 1965.
 4. Sheikh Abdullah, who was Prime Minister of Kashmir from 1948 to 1953, was removed from office by Dr. Karan Singh, the Governor, in August 1953 and arrested for alleged conspiracy to

CFL. Chavan, said: "After the Rann agreement we had thought that Pakistan would settle down to a period of peaceful co-existence and would not again make plans for a serious military adventure." But even as early as May 1965, Rawalpindi was making plans for a massive guerrilla attack. As part of a well laid-out plan, in the first week of August Pakistani guerrillas crossed the CFL in large numbers and infiltrated into Kashmir. On August 9 Pakistan reported the news of the formation of a revolutionary council in Azad Kashmir with the objective of taking over the administration of Kashmir when it fell to the guerrillas. A secret radio station, Sada-e-Kashmir (Voice of Kashmir), was set up by Pakistan, and it broadcast appeals to Kashmiris to assist the guerrillas. It also made a special appeal to south Indians, Sikhs, and Rajputs, as "all of them were groaning under the cast-Hindu oppressive rule."³ The radio station said that the 'mujahids' received no help from Pakistan and were depending on Allah alone.

Chavan, said: "In the first week of August, I had gone to Vizagapatnam to visit the naval centre there. Soon after I reached Vizag, by noon a message was received from the Prime Minister asking me to return to Delhi immediately. By then the infiltrators had entered India." On Chavan's return the Cabinet met at Shastri's residence for four hours to discuss India's possible responses and course of action in the face of the threat of war. New Delhi said that by August 9 about 3,000 guerrillas had crossed the CFL. On August 7 the Pakistani guerrillas captured the town of Mandi near Poonch and held it for four days. The same night near Baramulla on the road to Srinagar a large number of guerrillas were captured by Indian troops. A big guerrilla force moved towards Srinagar with the intention of reaching the capital on August 8 and participating in the demonstrations scheduled to be held there in connection with the anniversary of Sheikh Abdullah's arrest and dismissal.⁴

The guerrillas were charged with the task of creating

sufficient internal unrest that would overthrow the Kashmir government headed by G. M. Sadiq. The Indian forces were able to foil the plans of the raiders and round up seventy-five per cent of them in the first week itself. The guerilla raiders failed to rouse any great enthusiasm among the Kashmiris, partly because the raiders were identified as Punjabis and partly because there was no serious religious compulsion for Kashmiris to aid the guerillas. General Chaudhuri, commenting on the failure of the guerillas, said that one of the first principles of the guerilla movement was not adhered to by the Pakistanis. A guerilla movement could succeed only when the local population was drafted into the guerilla force.

India said that Pakistan had committed aggression by organizing the guerilla raids. The correspondent of 'The Times,' London reported from Rawalpindi that "there can be no doubt that the guerilla actions in Indian Kashmir result from infiltration from this side in an operation conceived, planned, and directed by the Government of Pakistan." General Nimmo investigated the reports of guerilla activities and informed U Thant that Pakistani guerillas were active across the CFL. The Secretary-General called Nimmo to New York for discussions and decided to publish Nimmo's reports. But Pakistan threatened to walk out of the U.N. if the reports were published. The Secretary-General changed his mind and submitted the reports to the U.N. Security Council only weeks later, on September 3. The report said that "General Nimmo had indicated to me that the series of violations that began on August 5, were to a considerable extent in subsequent days in the form of armed men, generally not in uniform, crossing the CFL from the Pakistan side for the purpose of armed action on the Indian side."

The Army HQ in New Delhi had several plans to meet Pakistani military attacks. Nehru and later Shastri had warned Rawalpindi to expect serious counter-attacks if armed pressure were put on Kashmir by Pakistan. Nehru had warned as early as 1962 that "if Pakistan by mistake invades Kashmir, it will be full scale war between India and Pakistan." When General Chaudhuri was asked by the writer on January 18, 1971 whether the Army had a clearly defined policy of action which the Government

had permitted him to take under various sets of circumstances, he said that the policy was decided "about mid-July, well before the infiltration." The decisions were taken when the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, and the Chief of Army Staff met one morning in July in the Prime Minister's office.

Chavan 'said': "I must say I found Shastri a very fine leader. He took decisions and stood by them. The co-operation he gave me was tremendous, and I gave him my full loyalty. The Prime Minister would often ask me how Pakistan would react if we moved in a particular area. We thought of all the possible combination of moves by Pakistanis. They could attack the Kashmir valley direct, as they did in 1947. The other alternative was that they could attack in the Chhamb area. We decided that from whatever direction the attack came, we should react in the Punjab. The plans were kept ready."

The Indian press and members of Parliament were seriously upset about the deep thrust the infiltrators made without being checked at the borders by India's border forces. Although a few Cabinet ministers and top generals knew of India's defensive-offensive plans, the general public was in the dark about them. The memory of India's reverses in the NEFA was still fresh in the minds of the people, who were not fully confident of the competence of the officers and men of the armed forces to meet the developing threat to India's security from Pakistan. These fears were shared even by some of the leaders, including V. K. Krishna Menon, who privately expressed them to Chavan.

The Defence Minister and his advisers felt that it was necessary to take immediate steps to stop the infiltrators on the borders and restore confidence in the effectiveness of India's armed forces not only in Kashmir but also throughout India. They were convinced that the best form of defence against the invaders would be an attack on their bases inside the enemy territory. Chavan visited the CFL in the Kargil and Uri sectors in the second week of August. He authorised the Army to take immediate steps to safeguard the border. On August 15, India crossed the CFL in the Kargil area which they had vacated two months earlier and occupied three mountain positions.

A sizeable force of regular Pakistani army crossed the FL and entered Bhimbar in Jammu. Reacting to this thrust, the Indian Army attacked in the Tithwal sector in the north-western bulge of the CFL, captured two strategic Pakistani positions, and sealed off the main invasion routes of the infiltrators. A confident Chavan came before the Lok Sabha on August 23 and declared that India had repulsed all Pakistani attacks and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. He 'said': "A notable feature of the operation in Jammu and Kashmir has been the strong support given by the Pakistani regular forces to the infiltrators on our side of the ceasefire line. In the Chhamb sector as also in the Tithwal sector, Pakistan moved up regiments of artillery and started heavy firing on our posts... The result of the battle has not been according to Pakistan's desire. All the attacks of Pakistan have been repulsed. Heavy casualties have been inflicted on them and we have maintained our position along the ceasefire line..."

India consolidated many points on the key route dominating Azad Kashmir and advanced across the CFL in the Uri sector. A number of strategic mountain posts in Pakistan, including the Haji Pir Pass, five miles on the Pakistan side of the border, were taken by India. Chavan said in the Lok Sabha on August 26 that "the cleaning up operations undertaken by the Army have met with complete success and our units are now in occupation of the Haji Pir Pass which is the main route through which these raiders have been moving."

Pakistan was not fully prepared for the severity of the Indian attacks which were, according to India, justifiable operations from a purely military standpoint. Shastri had informed Parliament that India considered herself free to attack the bases from which infiltrators continued to come. Pakistani commanders were concerned over the offensive capabilities of the Indian forces and decided that a major attack as per their plans was the only answer to India's military moves. The next stage of the war was a regular massed thrust by Pakistani Army in brigade strength. What began as guerilla activity in Kashmir by slow stages escalated into open hostilities between the two countries, and both India and Pakistan raced themselves up for the next phase of the confrontation.

On the morning of September 1, 1965 Pakistani tanks rolled into the Bhimbar-Chhamb area in southern Kashmir, across the international frontier. The attack was preceded by an hour-long shelling and three probing thrusts. A simultaneous attack was launched by Pakistan across the CFL. The Pakistani operation, named 'Operation Grand Slam', developed into an arc which stretched up to Deva in the north and Chhamb on the way to the city of Jammu. The main attack in the Chhamb area was made by two brigades of about 3,000 men each, supported by 100 tanks, 70 of which were Pattons. If the attack had succeeded, Pakistan could have probably cut off Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of India and one stroke bottled up thousands of Indian soldiers in Kashmir. On the first day, the Indian force of 1,000 men, outnumbered and outmanoeuvred, retreated six miles, and the battle honours went to Pakistan. A military disaster in the Chhamb sector faced India in September 1. General Chaudhuri, the Chief of Army Staff, found that apart from logistic disadvantages, Indian troops lacked heavy fire power to oppose the attack. At the request of the field commanders, at 4 p.m. he decided to ask for the support of the Indian Air Force (IAF). He conveyed his recommendation to the Defence Minister. Describing the circumstances that led to the use of the Air Force, General Chaudhuri told the writer: "We in the HQ got a call from Harbaksh Singh to say that unless the Air Force was used, Pakistani tanks would make rapid progress. He was insistent that the Air Force should be used. Harbaksh Singh spoke to me on the telephone. He begged that the Air Force be called in. There was not much time and we did a lot of work over the telephone. The Chief of Air Staff happened to be present there. We called him and we both agreed. And Chavan said 'Go ahead.'"

Referring to the induction of the Air Force, Chavan said: "On September 1, late in the evening, as the shadows lengthened, I was asked to give the orders to rush in the IAF. I had no time to consult the Prime Minister. The hour of decision had come. The Chief of Army Staff and the Chief of Air Staff informed me that the Air Force should now go into action." He asked

his chiefs whether they were certain that "we should do it now, at this moment." The chiefs informed him that the time was ripe for air action. "Without consulting Shastri, I asked them to go ahead. I informed the Prime Minister of my decision half an hour later. He backed my decision completely and stood by it."

But the Indian air attack did not come as a surprise to the Pakistanis. General Chaudhuri told the writer: "Our Air Force was ready. So was their Air Force. And so we lost four aircraft on the first day itself. They were expecting the use of our Air Force." Chaudhuri further 'said': "The decision to induct the Air Force was a government decision. We had decided from the very beginning that the Air Force would be used, that it would play its part when the time came. While the fighting was going on supposedly between the guerillas and our people in Kashmir our bringing in the Air Force would have unnecessarily enlarged the periphery of the fighting. But once their tanks moved into the portion which was clearly Kashmir, then there was no limitation in using the Air Force. In other words, the fact that we would use the Air Force was always accepted. When the time came, we took permission and used it."

The induction of the IAF and the destruction of Pakistani tanks angered Pakistani leaders. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, reacting violently to Chavan's statement in Parliament, said: "Mr. Chavan cried escalation. This was nothing but the perverse logic of the proverbial wolf in Aesop's fable. It is a pity nobody has told the Indian Defence Minister that Pakistan is not a lamb."⁶ Pakistanis were confident of their superior strength in the area of attack. On September 3 and 4 their troops made rapid advances into India. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) brought into the battle Sabre jet fighters. The IAF sent its small, but easily-manoeuvrable Indian-made Gnats to meet the legendary American fighter jets, and took a heavy toll of them.

On the ground, the Pakistanis pushed forward and advanced 18 to 20 miles from their frontier. After capturing the village of Jaurian on September 5, they reached the vicinity of Akhnoor, a strategic bridge city. There was jubilation in Rawalpindi and Karachi, and it looked

6. *Pakistan Times*, September 3, 1965.

as though the Pakistani thrust was gaining momentum and would spill over to other areas. General Musa, the Pakistani Commander-in-Chief, told his troops on September 5: "You have got your teeth into him. Bite deeper and deeper until he is destroyed. And destroy him you will, God willing." On September 4, Chen Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister, flew into Karachi, and what was intended to be a brief stop-over extended to a day-long conference with Bhutto. At the end of his talks, the Chinese leader said that his country supported "the just action taken by Pakistan to repel the Indian armed provocation."

Meanwhile, U Thant appealed to India and Pakistan on September 1 to stop the fighting. He said his appeal was prompted by alarming reports of a steady escalation of the fighting in the air and on the ground, involving regular armed forces on both sides. But neither of them was in a mood to listen to U Thant. Two days later, he placed before the Security Council General Nimmo's report and informed the members of the Council that Pakistan refused to give any assurance that the CFL will be respected henceforth. Pakistan told the U.N. observers that the attack was "purely a defensive measure to forestall Indian action in the area." General Nimmo made an official protest to Pakistan and an urgent request for the withdrawal of Pakistani troops. The U.N. Security Council passed a resolution on September 4, asking for cessation of hostilities and re-establishment of the CFL.

The press and the public in India were agitated by the deep Pakistani thrust and by China's close alliance and support to Pakistan. On September 4 Indian forces were deployed on the Punjab border and occupied the same position they had taken soon after the fighting began in the Rann of Kutch. The Army HQ in New Delhi knew that even a few hours of indecision and delay would be disastrous, and decided that the best course for India would be to make immediate thrusts towards Sialkot and Lahore.

On September 6 the Indian Army struck with the support of tanks and air power, a three-pronged offensive across a thirty-mile front was mounted from Amritsar, and Perozpore regions towards Lahore. The Indian Army made a dramatic announcement to a Pakistan radio station.

on September 6. He said: "In order to forestall the opening of another front by Pakistan, our troops in the Punjab moved across the border in Lahore sector for the protection of the Indian border." His announcement in Parliament was greeted with loud applause which echoed throughout the nation. India was visibly relieved and excited that at last the Indian Army had taken the offensive in the face of continued Pakistani aggression. The offensive gave India a sense of pride and self-confidence after her many reverses in the NEFA in 1962 and later in the Rann of Kutch. All the three Indian thrusts headed towards the 47-mile long, 140-feet wide, 15-feet deep Ichhogil canal, the formidable irrigation canal that defended Lahore and served as a tank barrier. The tasks assigned to the Indian troops were to reach the east bank of the canal, about three to nine miles from the Indian border, forestall the Pakistani threat of further invasion of India, and blunt the edge of the Pakistani war machine. The Indian forces in the north were ready to move the next day, and on September 7 pushed towards Sialkot in a pincer move to encircle this important railway junction which was the base of the Pakistani offensive into the Chhamb sector. Pakistan was forced to withdraw most of her armoured strength from the Akhnour area to meet the Indian offensive, and the threat to Kashmir was thus averted. After the Indian attack of September 6, a strongly-worded resolution was passed by the U.N. Security Council, calling for the withdrawal of all armed personnel back to the positions held by them before August 5, 1965. But both the countries rejected the appeal.

World opinion, all along unfavourable to India, became critical of the Indian move. On September 6, Harold Wilson said: "The news that the Indian forces have already attacked Pakistan territory across the international frontier in the Punjab is a distressing response to the resolutions adopted by the Security Council calling for ceasefire."⁷ Wilson's condemnation of India was echoed by many other countries, including Iran, Turkey, and Indonesia.

7. Six years later, in July 1971 Wilson expressed regret. He said he was wrong in his assessment and added: "I had been taken for a ride by the pro-Pakistani faction" of British officials.

Shastri. The British reaction angered Indian leaders. Shastri
not say that India had been attacked by Pakistan
crossed the international border or even when Pak-
launched her massive attack on Chhamb with heavy
The British government later found that the
ment made by Prime Minister Wilson was hasty and
sided and said that it did not mean unilateral con-
nation of India. "The New York Times", reflecting the
reaction, said on October 6: "India refused to per-
a plebiscite and in the last year she made it clear
her portion of Kashmir was to be considered an
integral part of India. President Ayub Khan evidently
ided that it was a case of accepting defeat or fighting."
The Soviet Union followed a very careful strategy and
ided hurting either India or Pakistan. She refused
join the embargo on arms supplies to the combatants.
xel Kosygin, the Soviet Premier, in identical messages
Ayub Khan and Shastri said on September 4 that it
s "hardly appropriate to place the question of the
uses of the origin of the conflict in the forefront, or
ek to determine who is right and who is to blame",
d asked both parties to "enter into negotiations for
aceful settlement of the differences..." The Soviet
ion did not, however, interrupt the work on the MIG
ctory or the Soviet economic assistance to India.
Pakistan was surprised by the force of the Indian coun-
r-attack in the Punjab. What India did was to keep
er main force in the Punjab and protect the route to
elhi, for there was no assurance that Pakistan would
ot strike in the Punjab after the threats her leaders
and held out of marching to Delhi. Shastri, the mild-
annered Indian Prime Minister, by himself would not
ave taken the responsibility to wage war with Pakistan
for that matter with anyone else. It was the spirited
action of the whole nation as voiced in Parliament,
the press, and elsewhere that gave him the determi-
ation to give the Army the necessary support.
India's publicity abroad was not geared to the war
and did not carry conviction. Pakistani diplomats in
Europe found it easy to convince many European capitals.

which were only too willing to see the war as an extension of the perennial Kashmir dispute, that India was the aggressor. The British Prime Minister's hasty opinion influenced the thinking of editorial writers and leaders of public opinion in many European countries. When the writer visited the foreign affairs editor of 'Le Monde' in Paris a few days after the Indian thrust towards Lahore, the editor argued that India was the aggressor and the war was in essence a religious war the Hindus of India were waging against a weak and small Muslim neighbour. When it was argued that his assessment was far from correct and that India was a secular State where many million Muslims lived, and that some of them occupied high positions, including the office of the Vice-President of India, the editor was surprised and wanted the writer to give him a letter for publication in the 'Le Monde'. When the Information Officer of the Indian embassy in Paris was approached for factual information to prepare the letter, he said that if the letter were published, there would be a prompt reply from the Pakistan embassy. He would have to deal with it, because the writer would have left Paris. He also said he did not have adequate material to frame a reply to the possible rejoinder from the Pakistanis. Later when the writer met the Indian ambassador, Rajeshwar Dayal, the ambassador was not enthusiastic either. He was not sure whether a letter to the editor of 'Le Monde' would help us to win. He asked the writer why instead of being in India to fight the war, he was in Paris.

The three rapid Indian thrusts towards Lahore, one of which reached the outskirts of the city, made many observers believe that India intended to take Lahore. There were minor differences of opinion in the Indian Cabinet on taking Lahore. When Chavan was asked whether the Indian forces ever intended to take the city, he 'said': "Well, I felt that we should have gone to Lahore. But the technical advice was that we should not. General Chaudhuri was not for it for technical reasons. Shastri would have liked it." Chavan was asked further whether it was true that while he was for taking Lahore, Shastri was in favour of encircling Sialkot. He 'said': "It is not true that he was not for taking Lahore. He said, 'Jab ye log yah kahate hain, to kya karen?'"

When the movement of tanks became difficult, but were pushed back. Pakistanis were handicapped by the narrow terrain of the marshy ground, and the old Indian tanks took a heavy toll of the enemy's Pattons. Pakistani forces fell back.

hands at the time of the ceasefire. The third column down south, advancing from Ferozepore through Khem Karan towards Kasur in Pakistan, met with stiff opposition from Pakistan's American-equipped and trained first armoured division. According to Indian accounts, in the Khem Karan sector Pakistan 225 tanks, out-numbering the Indian tank force by five to one and launched five separate attacks on Indian positions. Pakistanis penetrated 15 miles into Indian territory but were pushed back.

people." In the second week of September, India opened a diversionary attack across the Rajasthan-Sind border. The main fighting was confined to the Punjab. In the three-pronged Indian thrust to Lahore, the centre column advancing from Khaira reached Bukri on the east bank of the Ichhogil canal and gave India command of a stretch of the canal in the central area. Burki was at 12 miles from the centre of Lahore and only 5 miles from the Lahore airport. The second Indian thrust to the extreme north, moving along the grand trunk river crossed the Ichhogil canal and reached the Bata factory on the outskirts of Lahore. The Indian battalion which crossed the canal was pushed back to the bank and suffered heavy losses. But in this sector the counter-attacked and captured Dograi, 7 miles inside the town. The town changed hands at least three times during the three-week fighting and finally was in Indian hands at the time of the ceasefire.

(When these people say this, what can be done?) accepted the advice of the military strategists. But we should have gone on. That would have given us a little more advantage. If we had taken Lahore we would have demoralized them. The Pakistanis, who had kept their country in the dark about what happened and made the people think that they had won war, would not have then been able to mislead the people."

to Khem Karan and dug in. They held this position, a 30-mile square strip of Indian territory, even at the time of the ceasefire. India estimated 97 Patton tanks were destroyed or captured during the Khem Karan engagement, the most decisive and important single battle of the war. General Chaudhuri is credited with the idea of digging trenches and knocking down Pattons as they negotiated the trenches and came up with their bellies, the only vulnerable point exposed to attack.

Chavan told the Lok Sabha on September 8: "Our Army which moved across the Punjab border...has gained certain positions which it has held despite vigorous counter-attacks from the other side.... Our air action to hit the bases from which Pakistan has been launching air attacks on our territory has been continuing.... As far as we are concerned, our action is limited to make Pakistan realize that we will not tolerate any interference with the territorial integrity of India of which Kashmir is a part. We have to prevent the mounting of any attack by the Pakistani military machine on our territories." He spelled out Indian objectives without ambiguity and for the first time placed on record that India's action was limited to prevent attacks by Pakistan. He also expressed the Government's view that India would not like to exploit then or in future the vulnerability of the eastern wing of Pakistan which was not well defended, unless she was forced to do so by Pakistani escalation in the eastern wing. It was not India's intention to humble Pakistan in a defenceless area.

The tank battle near Sialkot which took place about the same time was described as the biggest tank engagement since the second world war. India had to lessen the pressure on Lahore to meet the Pakistani armoured thrust at Khem Karan. The destruction of bridges across the canal had already halted the Indian advance. India was forced to move large quantities of armour from the Punjab to reinforce the Sialkot offensive. In a daring move India sent from the Lahore to the Sialkot sector about 3,000 vehicles along a single road with constant danger of air attacks. The move helped the Indian offensive in Sialkot to inflict heavy punishment on Pakistani armour. At the end of the battle, India had dug

in 4,000 yards away from Sialkot and had cut the northern branch of the railway running into the city, which was practically encircled.

Both the countries made only minimal use of the air force and the navy. The principal operations of the war were confined to the land battle, and the maximum losses suffered by the combatants were on the ground. The Institute of Strategic Studies, London, reported that India lost 4,000 in dead and wounded and Pakistan about 5,000. Chavan announced in November 1965 that the number of Indians dead was 2,266 and wounded 7,877. India claimed 5,800 Pakistanis were killed. She also claimed that 471 Pakistani tanks and a third of Pakistan's air planes were destroyed or damaged. Pakistanis claimed to have damaged or destroyed 516 Indian tanks. Most foreign observers, however, agreed that Pakistan's losses were very much more than those of India in proportion to the strength of the two forces. About the tank battles, Chavan said: "The major areas of the tank battles were Khem Karan and Sialkot. India emerged victor in both these sectors. The sophisticated Patton tanks with their longer range, greater firepower, and better manoeuvrability had a rather psychological superiority over us in the earlier stages. In Khem Karan, the battle took place in our territory. The Pakistanis had the initial advantage of being the aggressor. As long as the fighting took place on well developed terrain and roads, they made progress. But when it went off the flat terrain and came to a question of fighting the battle by sheer courage and tactics, we think the Indian Army certainly fared better.

The air strikes by the IAF and even the PAF were limited to military objectives and areas in and around the battle fields. Some civilian areas in the towns were also bombed, but the damage to civilian life was negligible. "Pakistani students caused more damage in our anti-American riot in Karachi than all the Indian sorties over their principal cities" reported "The Washington Post". But the PAF attacked Chherata on the outskirts of Amritsar, a few hours before the commencement of the ceasefire on September 23. It also shot down a civilian plane far inside the Indian territory killing Balwantrai Mehta, the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

and his wife. But the air attacks were by and large limited to military objectives. Pakistan sparingly used F-104s. India's MiGs did not go into action, for they were not ready for action at that time. The Indian-built subsonic fighter plane, Gnat proved its effectiveness. Air Marshal P. C. Lal, who conducted the air operations, is credited with the tactics of the Gnats meeting Pakistan's Sabre jets at low altitudes where the jets were more vulnerable to attack and less effective.

While the U.N. continued its efforts to bring about a ceasefire, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain put pressure on both the countries to come to terms. The U.S.A. suspended supplies of military equipment to Pakistan and India. The U.K., which did not supply any military material to Pakistan, stopped shipments to India.⁹ China accused India of setting up fifty-six military installations in Tibet and of stealing several hundred Tibetan yaks. She issued an ultimatum to New Delhi on September 16, demanding the removal within 72 hours of "all its military works of aggression on the Chinese-Sikkim boundary" and return of the yaks with suitable apologies. China said if India did not comply with the demand, she would be "free to take any action it saw fit, and India must bear full responsibility for all the grave consequences arising therefrom."

In a radio broadcast to the nation on September 19 Chavan said: "A grave situation is developing on our borders due to China's threatening posture and deployment of her armed forces along the northern borders." The Defence Minister said the fact that the Chinese were holding out threats against India on flimsy grounds was enough proof, if proof were needed, of Sino-Pakistani collusion. He said if China committed aggression against India, "we are prepared to face it with grim

9. S.S. Dhavan, who later became Indian High Commissioner in London and then Governor of West Bengal, wrote on June 29, 1966 in the *Blitz* weekly; "As regards Britain, I see no future for Indo-British friendship, because reluctantly I have come to the conclusion that Britain does not regard the existence of a strong India in her interests and she will shed no tears, if India is disrupted."

determination" and added that he was confident the Indian 'Jawans' and officers who were fighting with courage against Pakistan, would give a good account of themselves if China attacked India. "We are resolved to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India and we will meet the new threat with valour and courage."

The attitude of the Soviet Union was vague in the beginning, and Moscow went along with the other members of the Security Council in demanding a ceasefire. On August 24 'Pravda' the Soviet communist newspaper, had called for an end to the conflict. After India advanced towards Lahore, "Tass", the Soviet news agency, urged India and Pakistan to "display realism and restraint and understanding of the grave consequences of the development of any armed attack." The Soviet Union avoided taking a firm attitude so as to keep both India and Pakistan on her side and said that "the armistice in Kashmir conflict cannot benefit either side." Alexei Kosygin wrote to Shastri and Ayub Khan that hostilities would be welcomed only by those interested in dividing the unity of Asian countries. The U.S.S.R. threw its full weight behind the U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire.

Strong pressures were put on India and Pakistan by the U.S.A. and the U.K. as well as the Soviet Union to accept the ceasefire. There was infinitely more pressure on India than on Pakistan. U Thant visited the two countries from September 12 to 14 and pressed the leaders of the countries to agree to a ceasefire. Shastri accepted the proposal, provided Pakistan agreed to stop the fighting and withdrew her forces. Selig S. Harrison, the New Delhi correspondent of 'Washington Post' reported that during U Thant's visit, the Indian Cabinet was divided over the timing of the ceasefire. General Chaudhuri was believed to have urged the Cabinet on September 13 to avoid cessation of hostilities and informed Chavan that his army was on the verge of a decisive victory in the Punjab. Harrison said the Defence Minister strongly supported Chaudhuri. Questioned on this report, Chavan said: "This was not true. I fully backed Shastri who wanted to accept the U.N. resolution of September 6." Harrison's report said

was inclined to accept the ceasefire proposal and was supported by Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari and Food Minister C. Subramaniam who were both worried about the adverse effect continued hostilities would have on India's economy.¹⁰

At a meeting of the Cabinet, some ministers argued that Pakistan would probably reject the ceasefire proposal. If India accepted it, she would get a chance to stigmatize Pakistan as the country which wanted to continue the war. Chavan 'said' to the writer: "We did not start the war. But when we had the initiative we did not want to give in without adequate assurance of Pakistan's desire for peace. I was not opposed to Shastri's line. We did not want to give the impression that we were just waiting to rush into a ceasefire. It was a question of timing. It was the difference in emphasis on the necessary psychological condition required for accepting ceasefire. There was no serious difference and there was no group-thinking inside the Cabinet. The basic idea was that we did not want to be blamed for continuing the hostilities."

But Pakistan held out till the last moment before accepting the ceasefire. When the war was going against India, Ayub Khan had warned New Delhi of dire consequences for starting the war. A week later after Pakistan had suffered a few reverses, he called for a purposeful ceasefire and an honourable settlement. He said that "this business of taking bits of each other's territory is not the answer." At a press conference in Rawalpindi, he appealed to the U.S.A. to intervene and said that "the United States can play a definite role. She can tell both India and Pakistan that she will not stand for this trouble."

After U Thant's return to New York, the Security Council discussed a formula for peace which he had worked out after his talks in India and Pakistan. The Council passed a third resolution, demanding a ceasefire that would become effective on the morning of September 22, withdrawal of armed personnel by India and Pakistan to the positions held by them on August

10. In the first fifteen days of the fighting India spent Rs. 50 crores.

25, and agreement to consider a political settlement. The very next day India accepted the proposal for a ceasefire and the demand for withdrawal of forces, but said that she did not accept the proposal to consider a political settlement. After some initial hesitation, Pakistan also accepted the U.N. demand for ceasefire. That was the end of the war.

Within a week of the ceasefire Chavan flew to Lahore front and personally congratulated the arm forces, particularly the jawans and the Gnat crew accompanied by Lieutenant-General Candeth, the deputy Chief of Army Staff, he drove through battere roads and dirty tracks, through sugarcane fields and visited Assal Uttar where in a three-day battle Pakists had lost 97 tanks. In a message to the three Service Chiefs, Chavan congratulated the officers and men the armed forces "on the magnificent account they have given of themselves during the past few weeks. . . . The have proved to the world that modern weapons of war notwithstanding, in the final analysis, it is the superior human spirit that leads a fighting force to victory." Chavan 'said' that one of the decisive factors in the war was the role of the Indian Air Force which helped the Army to defeat the Pakistani tank thrusts. "The support of our Air Force was very fine indeed. We have one or two reverses, especially when the Pakistan Air Force started attacking us. Air Marshal Arjan Singh the Chief of Air Staff, acted coolly and directed many successful attacks on enemy positions. The Air Force gave the Army the feeling that it had the necessary protection." Asked about reports of difference of opinions among the generals, Chavan 'said': "There were minor differences among the military leaders in Delhi on certain matters, but by and large our armed forces pulled together and there was good co-ordination. Air Marshal Arjan Singh and General Chaudhuri were two outstanding officers who did their best to repel the attack and carry the offensive into Pakistan." Paying a tribute to his Chiefs of Staff he 'said': "General Chaudhuri and Air Marshal Arjan Singh were both good officers. Arjan Singh is a fine gentleman—very in action and yet so gentle. He raised the morale of the men and he himself had no hesitation in facin

kind of threat."¹¹

At the time of the ceasefire, India held 740 sq. miles of Pakistan territory against 210 sq. miles of Indian territory held by Pakistan. Rawalpindi lost two of the most decisive battles, one in the Khem Karan sector and the other near Sialkot. But Pakistani authorities told the people that their small but determined armed forces repelled the massive attacks launched by large Indian forces and inflicted losses on India. Even now many Pakistanis believe they had won the war. When the writer visited Karachi in mid-1966 as one of the first Indians to go there after the war, a member of the staff of the Metropole hotel in Karachi and a student expressed their gratuitous sympathies to him for what they called the beating India had taken at the hands of Pakistan and for the starvation deaths in India consequent on the dislocation of Indian economy after the war. Ayub Khan's action in retiring eleven generals and thirty colonels soon after the war, however, showed that the fortunes of the war were not wholly in favour of Pakistan.

While India's losses were considerably less than those of Pakistan, India did not win the war either. India underestimated and was unprepared to meet the Pakistani attack in the Chhamb sector. Again Indian intelligence failed to assess the strength of the Pakistani armour in the Khem Karan sector. She blundered into crossing the Ichhogil canal in the Wagah sector without the protection of armour and took heavy punishment. Pakistani mistakes were far more grave and disastrous. Her losses were heavy in Khem Karan and Sialkot, where the two major battles of the war were fought. Pakistan's military might was indeed shattered and her generals humbled. In fact, the ceasefire came as a blessing to Pakistan more than to India.

The uneasy ceasefire did not bring peace. Skirmishes by Pakistan and India and diplomatic mud-slinging continued unabated. In mid-September, before the ceasefire agreement came into being, Kosygin proposed to

11. In an interview with the writer on August 9, 1970. In February 1971 Arjan Singh was appointed Indian Ambassador to Switzerland.

Shastri and Ayub Khan to hold direct talks between them at Tashkent or any other Soviet city "in order to achieve agreement on the re-establishment of peace between India and Pakistan." When Shastri and Ayub began their talks in Tashkent on January 4, 1966 there were grave doubts in India and abroad about the chances of a settlement. Shastri had insisted that Kashmir should not be discussed, while Ayub Khan wanted a political settlement of Kashmir as a pre-requisite for arriving at an understanding. But the pressure for peace was so great and the Soviet Premier's good offices, offered without any arm-twisting, so persuasive that the two countries came to a compromise. The joint declaration made by the two leaders stated that "all armed personnel of the two countries shall be withdrawn not later than February 25, 1966 to the position they held prior to August 5, 1965; that both sides shall observe the ceasefire terms and the ceasefire line; that the two countries agree to re-establish diplomatic relations and to consider measures for restoring economic and cultural relations."

Chavan was with Shastri in Tashkent to advise him on the military aspects of the agreement and was intimately involved in the negotiations. He was close to Shastri at the peace table, just as he was during the days of the hostilities. His qualities of leadership not only as Defence Minister but also as a negotiator made him a trusted aid to the Prime Minister. On January 11, 1966, a day after the Tashkent declaration was signed, Shastri died of heart attack. Chavan, who was staying in the Intourist hotel about 250 yards from Shastri's villa, arrived at the villa a few minutes after the Prime Minister's death. He flew back to Delhi with the dead body,¹² a saddened man who had lost a close friend and leader with whom he had worked in complete harmony.

Referring to the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistani war, Chavan said: "The 1965 war gave us a good bit of headache in the economic field. We were forced to retreat on the economic front. But the war affected 12. About Shastri's death and allegations of foul play, Chavan said: "I have nothing more to add to what I have said in Parliament."

Pakistan much more. It ruined her economic plans. After 1965 Ayub Khan was continuously in trouble. The weakness in the Pakistani system was that it put disproportionate emphasis on military strength. This became apparent after the war, and ultimately Ayub Khan himself became a casualty.

"In the beginning Pakistan achieved striking results on the economic front. The dictatorship was new, and the government of Pakistan was able to create a feeling among the people that it was beneficial to have a dictatorship. The people were willing to accept it. But their entire planning was divorced from social objectives. Prices rose, unemployment increased, and discontent grew. After the war there was an economic slump.

"Pakistan has prepared a five-year plan and is thinking in terms of social objectives. She has imbalances in regional development between the western and the eastern wings, a serious matter that can cause an explosion any day. There are also imbalances between areas in west Pakistan itself. Their main objectives today are economic growth with social justice and the removal of regional imbalances. I don't know how far they will succeed. I hope there will be some sort of political democracy in Pakistan after the elections.... But when I look into the future, I see dangers ahead. Pakistan may one day again think of another military adventure on our borders."

Chavan emerged out of the war with his prestige and popularity enhanced. The officers and men of the armed forces were proud of him and the fine leadership he had given them during the trying days of the war. After the hostilities, his efforts to improve the living conditions of the men and modernize the armed forces endeared him to them. He in turn was proud of their record of heroic deeds, of their patriotism, and valour. His faith in the secular character of India, which found expression in many of his speeches during the war, was reinforced by his experience with the men of the armed forces. He 'said' their loyalty and patriotism were beyond doubt and there was no chance of an army 'coup' in India.

When Chavan responded to Nehru's call and took up

Defence portfolio during the critical days of November-1962, he had told Nehru that he had no qualifications for the office except his patriotism. He had his doubts about the wisdom of moving from Bombay to Delhi, and there were moments in the first few months when he thought of Bombay with nostalgia. But when he found he could bring useful changes in the defence set-up and breathe self-confidence and pride in the armed forces, he settled down to a period of useful work in the service of the nation. It was when he was Defence Minister that he discovered India and India discovered him. After the end of four years, when he had to leave Defence portfolio in November 1966, he found the thing painful. He said: "I am a little sentimental about my years in the Defence Ministry have been greatly regarding."

Cows, Agni Kunds, Students

A violent mass demonstration in front of Parliament by about a hundred thousand "sadhus" (Hindu ascetics) on November 7, 1966 for banning cow slaughter disrupted life in Delhi and shocked the nation. Gulzarilal Nanda, the Home Minister, was accused by leaders of most political parties of mishandling the situation. After the violent demonstration in support of the ban, his position as Minister in charge of law and order became awkward. At a meeting of the CPP on November 7, Congress MPs demanded his exit, charging him that on issues affecting law and order as well as on the border situation, he had "failed in his primary responsibilities." Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, who was present at the meeting, did not defend him. He complained that he did not receive support from the Prime Minister and resigned. The Prime Minister promptly accepted his resignation.

When the Home portfolio fell vacant, many Congress leaders aspired to get it. The Prime Minister wanted to appoint Chavan. Her advisers contacted him in Bombay where he was convalescing after an emergency surgical operation. The offer came to him as a total surprise. After hurriedly getting medical clearance, he arrived in New Delhi. Chavan said: "I was not, as a matter of fact, very keen to change from Defence to Home,

1. November 11, 1966.

because the elections were round the corner. I was on my way to Cochin to watch the naval exercises. I stayed in Bombay for a day but was suddenly taken seriously ill and underwent an emergency operation. After I was slightly better, the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee held meetings in my house to select the Congress candidates for the forthcoming elections. This work went on till about November 8. I got word that the Prime Minister would like me to take over the Home portfolio. But there was opposition from some quarters."

S. K. Patil was among the first to protest to Indira Gandhi against the proposed appointment of Chavan as Home Minister. "The Mail" reported on November 19: "Mr. Patil is reported to have threatened to resign if Chavan was made the Home Minister. But Kamaraaj is believed to have tried to persuade Mr. Patil through Mr. Atulya Ghosh not to force the issue." Inspired reports in the press tipped S. K. Patil for the office. "The Indian Express" said that "in the opinion of some members of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Mr. S. K. Patil, Railway Minister, would have been an equally good choice for the Home portfolio. Mr. Patil himself is reported to be keen on this Ministry. But after the choice of the Prime Minister has fallen on Mr. Chavan, as it seems certain, he is unlikely to make an issue of it."

The Prime Minister informed K. Kamaraaj, the Congress president, of her intention to offer Chavan the Home portfolio and to drop Finance Minister Sachin Chaudhuri and Commerce Minister Manubhai Shah from her Cabinet. Kamaraaj desired that in view of the general elections due to be held three months hence, there should be minimum changes in the Government. He agreed to the appointment of Chavan as Home Minister after some persuasion but urged that before the change was made the Government should formulate its policies towards communal and sectarian organizations. S. K. Patil's resistance to the Prime Minister's move continued despite her assurance to him that Chavan would not deal with controversial issues like the

ashtra border dispute. Chavan suggested to the Home Minister later that she herself should deal with the border dispute and the future of Goa. He made a request to avoid misgivings about his actions as Home Minister on these controversial issues. His suggestion was that the Home Ministry would process the matters relating to these two issues, but the papers would be sent direct to the Prime Minister for final advice and decision. The border dispute had already been referred to a Boundary Commission under Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan and the decision to hold an opinion poll in Goa had been taken before Chavan became Home Minister. There was no danger of Chavan, who hailed from Maharashtra, influencing a settlement of these two issues.

At that time Indira Gandhi was not as unfettered in taking major political decisions as she later became. Chavan's appointment had to be delayed. When she wanted Sachin Chaudhuri and Manubhai Shah to drop out of the Cabinet, she ran into serious opposition. Atulya Ghosh, the Bengal Congress leader, and Sanjiva Reddi were against the move and finally persuaded her to give it up. Chavan's appointment was supported by Atulya Ghosh, although S. K. Patil and S. Nijalingappa, the Chief Minister of Mysore, were totally against it. In view of the sharp differences among the top leaders of the Congress, the meeting of the CPP executive scheduled for November 9 had to be cancelled. "The Times of India"² said in an editorial that "...the inept manner in which the business of reorganization of the Cabinet has been handled has further undermined its (Government's) authority." Prime Minister's advisers made a general assessment of the damage done to her image by her indecision in the face of opposition against Cabinet changes. They advised her to re-assert her authority by acting promptly and decisively.

After a delay of about a week, Chavan's appointment as Home Minister was announced, and on November 11 he took charge of the Home portfolio. This led to a chain of changes in the Cabinet. Defence went from Chavan to Swaran Singh. External Affairs went from

Swaran Singh to M. C. Chagla and Education from Chagla to Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. Chavan's appointment was welcomed by the press and public. "The Hindu" said that "within the cabinet Mr. Chavan is the best choice for the post. His record both as Chief Minister of Maharashtra and as Defence Minister should give him confidence in handling an assignment which is bound to be difficult and exciting during the next few months till the elections are over." "The Hindustan Times" welcomed Chavan's appointment as "the only hopeful feature in an otherwise nondescript Cabinet reconstitution..." The paper added: "Chavan's appointment to the Home Ministry met with powerful opposition from some quarters in the Congress party, on the main argument of his close association with narrow State issues. This may not be an unfair charge, but it ignores Chavan's capacity to grow with the office of which he has given abundant evidence during the four years he has been in New Delhi. At any rate, a confused state of mind is about the last thing Mr. Chavan can be accused of..."

When Chavan entered Home in 1966, the Government was faced with a serious crisis, a crisis not of external threat or of economic breakdown but of indecisions, jealousies, and vacillations among the top leadership. In fact, 1966 was a black year for India, a year of Hindu revivalism, of religious and regional fanaticism, of political confusion. India's capacity to hold together as a nation, her ability to plan and act with a sense of patriotism were in doubt. Widespread student unrest, the fast of Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Puri in support of the demand of the 'sadhus' for the ban on cow slaughter, and the threat of self-immolation by Sant Fateh Singh and eight other Sikh leaders put the Government, particularly the Home Ministry, to a severe test soon after Chavan took over. He said: "The three immediate problems I faced were the student agitation, the agitation against cow slaughter, and the fast and threat of self-immolation by Sant Fateh Singh in support of the Punjab's claim for Chandigarh." Two days after he assumed office, he faced an angry I intermittently shouted for an hour over

ment as Home Minister on the students' march to Parliament on November 18.

Even before Chavan came on the scene, student unrest had assumed serious dimensions. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar the police had taken stern measures against students. There were disquieting reports of the beating up of students, professors and principals, and the destruction of classroom furniture and laboratory equipment by the police. The Congress Party was worried about these developments, and at the CWC meeting in October 1966 the Prime Minister presented the draft of a statement on student unrest which she wanted the Committee to issue. She said the unrest reflected a dynamism which had to be channelled and utilised for constructive purposes. She also said that those in authority should seek to know why the students felt and acted the way they did and called for restraint in using force while dealing with students.

Four days after Chavan became Home Minister, he faced the threat of a mass demonstration by students before Parliament House. The demonstration, scheduled for November 18 and described as the "National Students March", was organized by the Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha controlled by the SSP. The organizers made frantic efforts in several States particularly Uttar Pradesh to mobilize students for the demonstration. The Government clamped section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, prohibiting processions and meetings in Delhi. On November 17 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was arrested.

Delhi was virtually sealed off. A huge police force was deployed all over the city with armed constables guarding strategic positions. Policemen were posted at railway stations, bus terminals, in and around Parliament House, and at other vulnerable areas. It was expected that a large number of students from outside would come to Delhi to join the demonstration. A police cordon was drawn round Delhi to prevent the entry of student agitators from outside. Schools and colleges were closed, and a strong police force was posted in the Delhi university campus. The stern measures taken by the Government prevented large-scale demonstration on November 18.

Although the Home Minister's immediate task was to maintain law and order, he felt he should go deeper into the problem of student unrest. He told the consultative committee of Parliament attached to his ministry that he did not agree with those who looked at the student unrest purely from the angle of law and order. He drew the attention of the committee to the reluctance of the older generation to share the experiences of the younger generation, its urges and aspirations, frustrations and joys. "We must do everything possible to provide a framework of idealism to the youth, and make it possible for them to work for its realization as active partners in the nation's struggle for progress and prosperity." He said "communication channels should be created between leaders and students" and added that the existing socio-economic conditions were responsible for the unrest which was not confined to India alone.

Revealing the world-wide sweep of the malady, came the statement of another politician from another hemisphere three years after Chavan had spoken. Walter Hickey, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, wrote in his famous letter to President Nixon that "our young people, or at least a vast segment of them believe they have no opportunity to communicate with the government, regardless of administration, other than through violent confrontation... and regardless of how I, or any other American, might feel individually, we have an obligation as leaders to communicate with our youth and listen to their ideas and problems." Hickey paid the price for his outspokenness and was dismissed by Nixon in November 1970. He underscored Chavan's opinion on the basic nature of the discontent among students. When he heard about Hickey's exit, Chavan exclaimed: "Thank God, this will not happen in India!"

Chavan's approach to the problem revealed his humanism, his concept of the duties and responsibilities of the Government. He said: "Every time there was a mob demonstration, there was the risk of the use of fire arms for the dispersal of crowds. In fact there was indiscriminate use of force against students. And this always gave rise to more trouble to find out how other countries met such situations. I in how they handled demonstrations.

of the subject of mob control. The Japanese method which consisted of using a massive unarmed police force to face the crowd appealed to me. The police have to be prepared to get some beatings also. I gave instructions in this regard. But I do not think we have succeeded yet in getting the police to adopt these methods. I am afraid this is going to be a long process."

A week after the abortive students demonstration, there was another blow-up in the Lok Sabha over the arrest and detention of Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Puri who was fasting in a Delhi temple in support of the agitation for the ban on cow slaughter. From time to time, on religious grounds Hindu organizations have opposed the slaughter of cows and demanded its ban. After the Jan Sangh became a political force in some north Indian States, the demand for the ban acquired greater force.

Chavan was of the view that the Jan Sangh was behind the movement and was using it for political purposes, especially as the general elections were round the corner. He 'said': "The Jan Sangh naturally led the movement. They wanted to create communal tension in the country before the general elections. I have no doubt about it. As a matter of fact, the agitation for the ban acted as a spur to communal troubles. But the way the agitation for the ban was conducted and allowed to grow showed there were deeper designs behind it. The movement was communal."

After the demonstration of November 7, the public agitation for the ban petered out. But religious leaders who wanted to keep the issue alive went on fast in protest against the Government's attitude towards the ban. The most prominent among them was Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Puri—one of the five Jagatgurus of the Hindu 'Saivait peeths' (seats of Saivait religious heads)—held in high esteem and veneration by many Hindus. He began a fast unto death in a temple on the banks of the river Jumna in Delhi to force the Government to accept the principle that the slaughter of cows should be banned.

At one of their morning meetings Chavan and his advisers in the Home Ministry came to the conclusion that the religious leader's fast in Delhi would rouse

public feelings and lead to communal violence. He decided to quietly remove the Jagatguru from Delhi. Chavan said: "I did not want any further trouble. I had him quietly removed to Pondicherry. After a few days he was moved to Puri and released. He was taken by special plane and did not know where he was being taken. He said he would continue his fast in Puri, but he was doing it in his own 'ashram' and the Government had no responsibility. For a few days I received a large number of letters from all over the country, some congratulating and others condemning me." The Jagatguru's arrest and removal came as a shock to the San Sangh and the Hindu communalists who had thought that religion would be an effective cloak for gaining immunity from arrest and detention.

After the Prime Minister and the Home Minister had discussed the immediate and long-term political and economic implications of a total ban on cow slaughter, the Cabinet announced the appointment of a commission to make recommendations to the Government. Chavan said: "Many persons were involved in the negotiations. Some of the big businessmen in the country supported the movement and gave funds. They were genuinely motivated and interested in the ban. For them the protection of the cow was a matter of conviction. But the Government had to examine the ban from various angles and decide on a policy that was consistent with the secular nature of India." The commission could not function well and remained, according to Chavan, in "suspended animation." Some of its members like Golwalkar, the chief of the RSS, did not cooperate with it. After the general elections in 1967, the agitation was soon forgotten. The indifference of the supporters of the ban to the working of the commission showed that the agitation was engineered with an eye on the elections. Indeed, in the elections in 1967, the Jan Sangh received rich dividends by improving its strength in many State legislatures.

Another important issue Chavan faced within a month of his assumption of office was the fast and three self-immolation by Sant Fateh Singh, the Akali I over the Punjab's claim to the city of Chandigarh. The Sant the Punjab-speaking areas in Haryana. The Sant

used the threat of self-immolation twice before. On December 17, 1960 he began a fast unto death with the demand that a Punjabi-speaking State should be formed forthwith. Master Tara Singh, another Sikh leader, met Prime Minister Nehru on January 8, 1967 and made him agree that among the factors governing the formation of new States, language was a very important one and that Punjabi was "the dominant language of the Punjab." Master Tara Singh "was satisfied with his talks with the Prime Minister" and asked the Sant to break his fast, as Nehru's statement met his demands.

Four years later, on the same issue Sant Fateh Singh announced that he would begin a fast on September 10, 1965 and that if he survived for fifteen days, he would jump into a specially prepared 'agni kund' (bowl of fire) near the place where the sacred weapons of the Sikh gurus are kept in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Sant put off his fast and his threat of self-immolation when hostilities broke out between India and Pakistan. Soon after the Indo-Pakistani war ended, Home Minister Nanda appointed a parliamentary committee headed by Sardar Hukam Singh, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, to examine the reorganization of the Punjab State. The committee recommended that the Punjab should be reorganized on linguistic basis and that the order should be demarcated on the basis of the scheme submitted by the Akali Dal (the staunch religious party of Sikhs) to the States Reorganization Commission in 1956. The CWC passed a resolution authorizing that "a Punjabi-speaking State be carved out of the existing Punjab State." The Government appointed a commission, whose recommendations were accepted by it with slight modifications. Sant Fateh Singh seemed to be satisfied with the reorganization of the State and said that any dispute that might arise over the adjustment of the boundaries could be settled by negotiations. He said in an interview on July 26, 1966: "I am satisfied with the formation of the Punjabi Suba (State), but not fully satisfied with its form", and added that "peaceful methods are the only methods in my mind for settling the differences over the boundary."

The linguistic reorganization of the Punjab left Sant

He decided to give up politics and disillusioned. He decided to give up religious teaching. But the ambitious men and him wanted political power and forced him back to politics. He had never defined what areas would constitute the Punjab Suba of his conception. He had left a loophole for further agitation by declaring that he was not fully satisfied with the form of the Punjab Suba. In 1966 he demanded that all common links between Haryana and the Punjab be snapped, that Chandigarh, their joint capital, be made the exclusive capital of the Punjab, and that the Punjabi-speaking pockets in Haryana be merged with the Punjab State. In spite of the appeals made by the Prime Minister and Chavan, the Sant began his fast on December 17 and threatened that he would commit self-immolation on December 27. Seven members of the Akali Dal command also decided on self-immolation twenty-four hours before the Sant was due to consign himself to the flames in the 'agni kund'. Chavan's position was that under the threat of fast and self-immolation no discussions could be held. Jaya Prakash Narayan, the respected Sarvodaya leader, and many others requested the Government to offer concessions to the Sikh leader. They also tried to persuade the Sant to give up his threat of suicide.

All the negotiations failed, and on December 26 the Akali leaders who had volunteered for self-immolation had their bath at 4 p.m. in the temple tank, and prepared to offer their last prayers. On the terrace of the temple, the 'agni kund' were ready. At 3-30 p.m. Sardar Hukam Singh, speaker of the Lok Sabha, accompanied by liberal leaders, reached the Golden Temple and began negotiations with the Sant and his followers. At 4 p.m. a self-immolation had not taken place. A few minutes after another announcement was made that the self-immolation had been postponed. At 5 p.m. the Sant's committee of the Akali Dal announced that "it is certain that the proposal would be placed before the Akali Dal finally accepted the

posals made by Sardar Hukam Singh. The Sant broke his fast and the seven leaders gave up their idea of self-immolation.

There is a humorous aspect to this tragic-comic episode. Before Sardar Hukam Singh left for Amritsar, he held consultations with Chavan. The Home Minister did not make any commitment, but asked Hukam Singh to do his best to avert the tragedy. After his first round of talks with the Sant on the fateful day, Sardar Hukam Singh went back to the Circuit House in Amritsar where Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, the Chief Minister of Punjab, was staying. Hukam Singh consulted the Chief Minister and asked him to give clarifications on some of the points raised by the Sant. Chavan 'said': "That evening the Chief Minister telephoned to me from Amritsar and asked me whether the Government would straightway appoint a commission to go into the issues raised by the fast. I told Musafir that we would consider the demand, but I could not make any commitment at that moment. I was very clear and categorical. I told him I could not be a party to a decision of that nature at this stage. I had put it across to him very clearly. But within ten minutes I got the news here on the teleprinter in my house that the Government had agreed to the demands of Sant Fateh Singh and that he was giving up his fast."

Chavan was surprised and thought that some confusion had arisen somewhere. He asked the Chief Minister over the phone what had happened. Musafir told him. "I will come and tell you all about it." The next day when the Chief Minister came to Delhi, Chavan asked him: "Did you hear me wrong or what?" Musafir coolly replied: "I heard you right. I told him a lie, because in Sikh politics we have to do it. Now he has stopped the fast and he will not go ahead with it." Chavan told Musafir that he did not expect a responsible person like the Chief Minister to have acted in the way he did and asked him why he did it. Musafir replied: "Mai ne to kiya hai. Ab aap jo chahe keejiye, Mujhe phasi deejaye. Lekin mai ne Panjab ko ek sangharsh se bachaya." (I have done it. Now you may do what you like. Hang me, if you like, but I have saved the Punjab from an upheaval.) Chavan 'said' that in retrospect what Musafir

did was perhaps the only thing he could have done. "I don't hold Hukam Singh responsible. Musafir told him the Government had accepted the demands. The responsibility was his."

Chavan's first month in the Home Ministry was indeed eventful, and the manner in which he met the three difficult threats—the students' march to Delhi, the fast of Jagatguru Sankaracharya, and the threat of self-immolation by Sant Fateh Singh—immediately raised his stature in the Government and in the ruling party. The Statesman² said that Chavan's first statement as Home Minister was "refreshingly firm", and he "surprised everyone by its uncompromising tone." "The Indian Express" thought that "in his first appearance as Home Minister in both Houses of Parliament, Mr. Y. B. Chavan created a good impression...." He met explosive situations which would have sent even a seasoned minister into jitters with such coolness, tact, and understanding that when a settlement was reached there was the least degree of rancour on either side.

The Home Minister had to deal with many issues of national importance which made the ministry the centre of attention and critical scrutiny by the press and the public in India. He was also required to deal with many unobtrusive subjects which did not catch the public eye. Indeed, the Home Ministry encompassed within itself almost every aspect of national life. It was responsible above everything else for national security. It controlled the Intelligence Bureau, the Central Bureau of Investigation, the civil defence, the home guards, the Central Reserve Police, the Border Security Forces and the Indian Tibetan Border Police. Its functions included the selection of High Court and Supreme Court judges, the appointment of Governors of States, the recommendation of awards and titles for distinguished persons, the protection of linguistic minorities, and the welfare and development of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. It kept a vigilant eye on Pakistani infiltrators, on all foreign agents in India, on postal censorship, and on obscene literature. It looked after Kashmir affairs, the administration of the Union Territories, matters relating to

north-east India, and States reorganization. It was also in charge of administrative reforms, recruitment, appointment and transfers of the personnel of the all India Services like the Indian Civil Service (ICS), Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Police Service (IPS), and the Central Secretariat Service. It was in charge of the cases of corrupt government officials, malpractices of politicians, ministers and businessmen. It also dealt with the Union Public Service Commission.

While the ministry was primarily responsible for national security, for ensuring respect for the federal structure of India and orderly administration, it was also in charge of a thousand trivialities. The study of some of the subjects that Chavan dealt with as Home Minister revealed that nothing escaped the scrutiny of the Home Ministry. The following is a list of subjects picked at random: New Year rowdyism in New Delhi, grant of maternity leave to government servants after the birth of the third child, beatniks and hippies in Delhi, shifting of butcher shops from the neighbourhood of Hindon aerodrome to avoid attracting vultures, the Ramakrishna Mission functioning in the NEFA, political propaganda and the slum fires in Madras, construction of Manipur aerodrome, slum clearance in Delhi and its repercussions, location and removal of statues in public places in Delhi, State lotteries, all-India Services personnel marrying foreigners, fire hazards in Indian cooking, lease of hotel in Delhi constructed by New Delhi Municipal Committee, precautions to be taken when Id and Holi fall on near dates. The list is only illustrative, not exhaustive. Nothing was too high, nothing too low for the Home Ministry.

Nevertheless, the Home Minister's main preoccupation was with political developments in the States and at the Centre and with the creation of favourable conditions for orderly progress towards social and economic objectives. One of the tasks Chavan faced after his first few months in office was to ensure free and fair exercise of the franchise by the voters in the general elections in February 1967. Chavan thought that the emergence of communal forces was a threat to the secular concept of Indian democracy. He had his misgivings about the success of the Congress Party in the elections as a result of the erosion of its strength in successive by-elections

for the debacle. A large section of the traditionally pro-Congress voters was disgusted with the factionalism and bossism inside the party. The Congress had provided a broad political platform for India's freedom struggle and had emerged as the largest political party when India gained independence in 1947. The Congress governments which ruled at the Centre and in almost all the States for nearly twenty years thereafter made convenient adjustments and watered down many of the policies contained in the party's manifestos and resolutions. The delay in the implementation and the dilution of the party's programmes on such vital issues as land reforms, food procurement and distribution, and on national language brought disillusionment to the voters. The popular image of the Congressman which before and immediately after independence used to be that of a person of integrity and selfless service slumped to what Kakasaheb Kalelkar, the respected Gandhian leader characterized in Parliament as that of a person clad in white khaddar hiding a dark heart. The poor image of the party and the internal conflicts in it helped the opposition parties to defeat the Congress by entering into 'ad hoc' electoral alliances and putting up united fronts against the party in many States.

Although the Congress was rejected by the voters in several States, it managed to retain its position as the single largest party in the Lok Sabha, capturing 40.78 per cent of the votes and 273 (54.62 per cent) seats out of 521, gaining a slender majority of 13. It was returned with safe majorities only in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Mysore, and Maharashtra. As 'The Indian Express' commented, a good deal of the "credit for keeping Maharashtra safe for the Congress must necessarily go to the Chavan-Naik leadership at the political level." Chavan was returned to the Lok Sabha from the South Satara constituency.

Summing up the political situation Chavan faced when he became Home Minister in the new Cabinet formed by Indira Gandhi in 1967, he 'said': "Many issues became major matters of political controversy both in Parliament and in the press. The challenges the Home Ministry had to face were qualitatively different. Till 1967 the Government had a sort of monolithic quality, and there was

After the elections the political complexion of India changed. Different State governments run by parties with different political ideologies—some with extreme right tendencies and others with radical left ideologies—came into being. On the one hand was the government of Kerala, run by the communist alliance, and on the other was the government of Orissa, dominated by the conservative Swatantra Party. In between there were other shades, provided by the Akali Dal government in the Punjab and the DMK government in Madras. The Congress governments formed soon after the elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan had to face many difficulties. The Haryana government was unstable. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Mysore, and Maharashtra had fairly strong Congress governments. The result of all these new developments was that the relations between the States and the Centre became tricky. I had to absorb many shocks and face ticklish issues, including the question of the powers of Governors and the functioning of State legislatures. The role of the Home Minister in all these matters had to be determined at every stage and I had to traverse an uncharted area." Soon after the elections, the leaders of non-Congress political parties in charge of State governments expressed their desire to work in co-operation with the Government of India. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Chief Minister of Kerala, stated in March 1967 that in the prevailing situation in India, it was essential that the Congress government at the Centre and the non-Congress governments in the States, should function in "a spirit of co-existence." He said: "I want to make it clear that I and my Cabinet colleagues will be prepared to co-operate to the utmost with the new Central government" and added that "our pleading strongly for the interests of the people of Kerala and sometimes entering into heated arguments and counter-arguments with the Centre do not mean that we want to weaken the Centre." The desire to co-operate was equally evident among the Congress leaders at the Centre. Within a month of the formation of the new Cabinet, Indira Gandhi told a conference of Chief Ministers that the Centre and the States were partners and no new problem had arisen "merely because of the

of governments of different political persuasion at the Centre and in the States."

In spite of the genuine desire of the leaders to work together, divergent political ideologies and the existence of dissimilar economic and social conditions in different States soon brought to the surface strains in the relations between the Centre and the States. The first confrontation between the two power structures was at the Chief Ministers' conference called by Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister, in April 1967. The Chief Ministers were critical of Delhi's decision to curtail the overdrafts given by the Reserve Bank of India to the States, and of the reluctance of the Centre to provide more assistance to the States for development plans and payment of dearness allowances to their employees. C. N. Annadurai, the Chief Minister of Madras, wanted the residuary powers left by the Constitution of India with the Centre to be given to the States.

Chavan 'said': "Differences between the Centre and the States are normal in all federal arrangements. What was needed was an attitude of co-operation. The Prime Minister always thought in terms of extending co-operation to the States. Only in the case of the United Front governments in Kerala and West Bengal, we had differences because of certain of their attitudes, especially towards the maintenance of law and order. Somehow we did not get on well enough with the two governments." The United Front governments of Kerala and West Bengal were dominated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—CPI (M). One of the partners of both the coalition governments was the pro-Soviet and supposedly less radical Communist Party of India (CPI).

Discussing the tensions that arose between the Centre and the States, Chavan 'said': "Though some theoreticians had referred to the possibility of tension between the States and the Centre, in the past no one had the occasion to actually tackle it in the different forms it manifested itself in different States. The U.F. government in West Bengal was in a category by itself. There were problems in other States also." The framers of the Constitution of India had kept in mind the possibilities of situations similar to those that emerged in West Bengal and some other States and had made provisions that ensured a

strong Centre which could withstand pressures from the States. The Constitution provides that the powers of every State legislature are to be exercised in complete compliance with the laws made by Parliament and the Government of India has powers to give directions to the States to ensure such compliance. Eight articles of the Constitution deal with the powers of Parliament and the State legislatures. Parliament has exclusive powers to make laws for the whole of India or any part of it on one hundred subjects mentioned in the "Union list" like defence, foreign relations, communications, currency, and audit of accounts of the Central and State governments. The State legislatures have powers to make laws on sixty-six subjects grouped in the "State list", including maintenance of law and order, education, agriculture, land tenure, local self-government, public health, industries, and specified items of State revenue.

There are fifty subjects in the "Concurrent list" on which both Parliament and the State legislatures have parallel powers, subject to checks and balances. The Constitution, however, gives more powers to the Centre than to the States so as to ensure a strong Centre. It also gives Parliament residuary powers to make laws on matters not mentioned in any of the three lists, and also on those subjects in the "State list" which are declared to be of national interest by a majority of two-thirds of the members in the Rajya Sabha.

And yet the Centre has found it almost impossible to ensure that its policies and programmes are carried out by some of the States. For instance, the Congress has passed many resolutions on land reforms and language policy, but it has not been possible for the Congress Government at the Centre to get all the States to implement them. As long as the Constitution is what it is, this is one of the frustrations the Centre will have to live with, one of the limiting factors in the Government's efforts to bring about a uniform degree of social and economic development.

However, the interest of the Centre even in areas which fall within the purview of the States has become pronounced. When Chavan was asked about the Centre's role in the maintenance of law and order which is a State subject, he said: "The main responsibility is that

of the State governments, but we can help the States by offering them communication facilities and additional police force if they so desire. Moreover, some of the threats to law and order arise out of opposition to the policies pursued by the States and some by the Centre. In whatever happens in any part of India, the Centre has an interest. The country as a whole has a stake in it. In fact, national security is the prime responsibility of the Centre. We have to be in touch with developments all over the country. The officers of the Indian Police Service in all the States have an important part to play in the administration of law and order and this cadre of officers is controlled by the Centre. We are in constant touch with developments throughout the country. We have to go to the help of the States in distress. West Bengal was no exception."

Many other States besides West Bengal and Kerala had differences with the Centre over the role of the Governors in the formation of ministries and in the summoning and proroguing of State legislatures. In 1967 there was near political chaos in many States, and the Centre had to take measures to ensure the smooth functioning of democratic institutions. After the elections in 1967, one of the first acts of the Government of India was the suspension of the Rajasthan legislature and proclamation of President's rule in the State. In the mad scramble for

8. According to Chavan, the most important problem the States faced was not the maintenance of law and order but financial. "I have always thought that financial problems are more important than any other, and these are likely to demand more attention in the future, because in many States, the comparatively less developed areas are becoming more articulate." He said the Centre had rushed to the help of the States in distress without showing any discrimination and had given priority to areas affected by famine, drought or floods. After he became Finance Minister, he told Parliament on December 15, 1970 that in response to requests from State governments, the Centre had sent special teams to visit Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal for assessment of the central assistance required for relief and rehabilitation measures to meet the havoc of the floods of 1970. He added that the recommendation of these teams for an expenditure of Rs. 6.14 crores in Assam, Rs. 6.29 crores in Bihar, Rs. 14.35 crores in Uttar Pradesh, and Rs. 19.85 crores in West Bengal had already been approved by the Government and that assistance to the other States would be decided after receiving the reports of the study teams.

office, some parties including the Congress used violence in restraining legislators from meeting the Governor to inform him of their party affiliations. When Mohanlal Sukhadia, the leader of the Congress legislature party, failed to form a government, the Governor recommended the imposition of President's rule. Chavan defended the Governor's action and told Parliament: "The Government agreed with the assessment of the Governor of Rajasthan and were of the view that regrettable as it was, there was no alternative to the assumption by the President temporarily of the functions of the State government under article 356 of the Constitution."

This was the beginning of a series of deadlocks in other States where no party emerged with absolute majority and the Governors had to decide on the relative strength of the parties. The pressurizing of Governors by party leaders to accept their claims and the defection of legislators from one party to another for getting ministerial posts or other benefits became a common spectacle in many States in north India. Chavan said: "Non-Congress coalition governments in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh were practically controlled by former Congressmen who had defected from the Congress." In all these States as well as in the Punjab, the State governments had differences with the Centre. In November 1967, the non-Congress coalition ministry in Uttar Pradesh faced a constitutional crisis, and the Government of India proclaimed President's rule over the State. President's rule was imposed twice in two years in Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and the Punjab also came under President's rule. The situations were not similar in any two States, and the Home Minister had to react to each situation on its merits. He was criticized for interference in the affairs of some States and questioned on non-interference in some others. The action of the Haryana Governor in proroguing the legislature on the advice of the Chief Minister was criticized by Opposition members, who charged Chavan with failure to give directions to the Governor against prorogation and alleged that the Governor had failed to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution." Chavan was accused of pleading helplessness to intervene in the affairs of some States when it suited the Centre and of

the Governors to the position of "toys in the hands of the Home Minister" in other States.

The main controversy over the role of Governors centred on the circumstances in which a Governor should act on his own, independent of the advice of the Chief Minister of his State. Referring to the summoning and proroguing of legislatures, Chavan said that normally the Governor would act on the advice of the Chief Minister, but he visualized exceptional circumstances which might compel the Governor to reject the advice. When a Chief Minister who faced a motion of no-confidence wanted to circumvent it by getting the legislature prorogued, the Governor would have to act on his own. Chavan, however, added that "if we allow the Governor to act in his own discretion in any situation or in all circumstances, it will be the end of the federal system."

The position of the Governor in the Constitution is anomalous, for although he is not an elected functionary, he is the constitutional head of the State. Under article 154 of the Constitution the executive power of the State is vested in the Governor. While the President of India has the power to appoint and dismiss the Governors, he has no power to give directions to them about the formation of ministries or the summoning and proroguing the State legislatures. As the constitutional head of the State, the Governor is required to act with the aid and advice of his council of ministers.

The role of the Governors was far from enviable. They were required to take decisions on situations involving conflicting claims of parties aspiring to form governments. Even after the strength of the parties was sorted out and a government formed, there were often fluctuations due to defections of legislators from one party to another. Defections took place in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Pondicherry, and Manipur. In Haryana four members from the Jan Sangh defected to the Congress in October 1967, but a few days later one of them went back to the Jan Sangh. Defections became a two-way affair, and in 1967 almost every day some member or the other of the State legislatures changed parties. "A defection-free day" became news.

Political defections led to the fall of 16 State governments between March 1967 and June 1968. There were

defections before, but most of these were from other parties to the Congress. Between 1962 and 1967, 229 legislators had defected to the Congress. But after the elections in 1967, defection became an art and a way of life with many elected representatives of the people. Over 500 members of legislatures defected in the first sixteen months after the elections in 1967. Defections were fortunately confined to State legislatures and did not affect Parliament.

One of Chavan's major achievements was the preparation of a report on defections, which he 'said' was "an important document of interest to all students of Indian politics. All political parties have a period of transition, a period in which splits and amalgamations are bound to take place. But what is most undesirable is that defections take place purely on personal considerations and with the motive of getting political power through short cuts. What we have now suggested is that any person who defects disqualifies himself from becoming a minister for a year." Chavan was asked whether the Congress had also played the game of defection, and he 'said': "Everybody had a share in it."

As a result of defections and other causes, at one stage almost the whole of north India was under President's rule — the Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. As Home Minister, Chavan was in direct charge of the administration of all these States, and he had to solve administrative and political problems in these States with the help of the consultative committee of Parliament for each of these States. He 'said': "This was indeed a very heavy responsibility I had to undertake." The Home Minister was answerable to Parliament not only about the actions of the Governors but also about their appointments. The Centre generally chose for the office of Governor persons who had held high public offices, had distinguished themselves as administrators, were academicians with aptitude for management of public affairs, retired judges, retired army officers, business-men with stature in public life, or eminent lawyers. Chavan 'said': "My difficulty was that in the first six months after I became Home Minister, I had to make proposals for the appointment of eight or ten Governors and had to get the right people for the post."

true that everyone I approached was ready to accept the post of Governor. In many instances I had to persuade the person to accept the office."

He faced strong criticism over the appointment of Nityanand Kanungo, an elder Congressman who was defeated at the polls, as Governor of Bihar. The non-Congress government of the State unanimously rejected the choice. Opposition parties accused the Centre of foisting a Congressman on a non-Congress State. Chavan 'said': "In the seven non-Congress States, Governors were appointed without any difficulty, and it was the inability of the Bihar Chief Minister to take his Cabinet colleagues with him that created a temporary impasse." He informed the Lok Sabha that "during the last twenty years, we have established a convention, an extra-constitutional position, that the Chief Minister of the concerned State should be consulted before the Governor is appointed.... The Chief Minister of Bihar was consulted more than once.... The point is whether the Central Government could foist on a non-Congress State government a congressman as Governor without the express concurrence of the State government.... I stand by the convention that the Chief Minister should be consulted, but at the same time...the Chief Minister should not have the right to veto..." Chavan finally made the Chief Minister accept Kanungo as the Governor.

During the whole of 1967 and 1968 the Home Minister faced political crises one after another, in quick succession—dissolution of legislatures, imposition of President's rule over half-a-dozen States, large-scale defection of legislators, and consequent political instability. Similar situations had not arisen earlier, because in the past the Congress was in power at the Centre and in almost all the States, and the writ of the Centre ran without let or hindrance throughout India. The responsibilities of previous Home Ministers, except in the case of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, were confined to routine administrative matters. After 1967 Chavan became answerable to Parliament and the people for all manner of political and constitutional crises in India, for the acts of omission and commission of Governors, of Chief Ministers, of legislators. In fact, he became the supreme attorney for all manner of men at the bar of Parliament.

Besides being the supreme attorney for legislators and State governments, for Chief Ministers and Governors, Chavan was also the arbiter of disputes between the States and between different regions of the same State. The three important inter-State disputes that engaged his ministry's attention were between Mysore and Maharashtra, the Punjab and Haryana, and between Assam and Nagaland. Before Chavan became Home Minister, the thirteen-year old border dispute between Mysore and Maharashtra, perhaps the most studied inter-State dispute, was handled by three successive Home Ministers—Govind Ballabh Pant, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Guizarilal Nanda. None of them wanted to displease their Congress colleagues in either State, and the impasse continued.

The dispute arose over Maharashtra's claim to 2,806 sq. miles of territory in Mysore, covering 814 villages and towns with 6.7 lakh people, in exchange for 1,180 sq. miles of territory in Maharashtra, comprising 260 villages with 3.3 lakh people. Maharashtra staked its claim on the basis of the language spoken by the people in the border area as shown in the 1951 census and wanted the village to be taken as the unit for exchange of territories. Mysore rejected the demand as impractical, basing its argument on the star-taken by the

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States Reorganization Commission and wanted adjustments to be limited to areas within the range of a few miles of the border.

A month before Chavan took over Home, on the initiative of Maharashtra, the Government of India had appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Mehr Chand Mahajan, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, to suggest realignment of the borders. Both the States agreed to abide by the commission's recommendations. The report of the commission submitted on August 25, 1967 was in favour of Mysore retaining a large part of Belgaum district claimed by Maharashtra and giving a part of Kasargode tehsil in Kerala to Mysore. Maharashtra was to get Nipani and Khanapur towns as well as 264 villages in Mysore.

Maharashtra did not accept the report and demanded that the issue should be examined afresh. Chavan tried to keep himself aloof from the negotiations for a settlement so as not to give room for suspicion of pressure from him in Maharashtra's favour. He requested the Prime Minister to handle the negotiations. A new political complexion was given to the issue in 1969 when the Congress split into two, with the ruling Congress in power in Maharashtra and the old Congress in Mysore. The dispute remained unresolved even after Chavan left Home in July 1970.

Chavan played an active role in resolving the border problem between the Punjab and Haryana. The dispute was over the possession of Chandigarh, the common capital of the two States, the control of the Bhakra Dam facilities, and the readjustment of border areas. When Chavan was Defence Minister and the division of the old Punjab was under discussion in 1965, he had informed Prime Minister Shastri that in the interests of the stability and peace in the area which borders on Pakistan, Chandigarh should belong to the Punjab. A fortnight before he became Home Minister, the old Punjab State was divided into the Punjab and Haryana. Chandigarh and a 10-mile area around it was made a Union territory, administered by the Centre. The Akali Dal under the leadership of Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh demanded the immediate inclusion of Chandigarh in the Punjab and the realignment of the borders.

In the first proposal Chavan made to the Internal Affairs Committee of the Cabinet for informal discussion on the issue, he suggested that Chandigarh should go to the Punjab and steps should be taken to help Haryana to build a new capital. The Akalis in the Punjab decided on direct action to force the Centre to agree to their demands. In December 1966 Sant Fateh Singh began a two-week fast with the threat of self-immolation at the end of it. On December 26 Sardar Hukam Singh, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was flown by the Government of India in a special plane to Amritsar to persuade the Sant to give up his threat of self-immolation. Hukam Singh announced in Amritsar that it was agreed that the dispute be referred to the Prime Minister for arbitration and that the Government of India would appoint a commission to make recommendations on the future of the Punjab-speaking areas outside the Punjab. A Government of India spokesman said that Hukam Singh had made the statement on his own and that the Government had no knowledge of any proposal to appoint a commission. Sant Fateh Singh claimed that Hukam Singh had given "almost a solemn assurance that Chandigarh should go to the Punjab."¹

In October 1969 the agitation was whipped up again by the Akalis after Darshan Singh Pherruman, an 83-year-old Sikh leader, fasted unto death in support of the Punjab's claim to Chandigarh. His death on October 27, on the 74th day of his fast, led to State-wide demonstrations by all the parties in the Punjab, including the Congress. Chavan told the Lok Sabha on November 18 that a decision on Chandigarh and the disputes connected with it would be taken before the budget session of Parliament in February 1970. He added: "It is essential for the future well-being and prosperity of the people of the two States that the solution should be such as would minimize bitterness on both sides and promote good neighbourly relations between them."

But the irrepressible Sant Fateh Singh would not rest, and he announced he could wait no longer for a settlement. Knowing well that a decision on the dispute was imminent, he began a six-day fast on January 26, 1970 as a prelude to self-immolation. The Government of India

announced on January 29 that "after very carefully weighing the claims of the two States, the Government had decided that the capital project area of Chandigarh should as a whole go to the Punjab" and that the Hindi-speaking part of Fazilka tehsil in Ferozpur district in the Punjab should go to Haryana. The Government also announced its decision to appoint a commission to examine other claims by the two States.

After the decision was taken, the Government took a firm attitude in dealing with fresh demonstrations in Haryana and the Punjab against the Centre's award. In ironing out the differences between the two States, Chavan had to absorb all the shocks of politically-motivated fasts and acts of violence. He knew that sternness was not all that a Home Minister required and that tact and patience were important in dealing with explosive disputes charged with the emotional fervour of masses of people.

Another inter-State border dispute which kept Chavan on his toes was between Assam and Nagaland. He 'said' that "the most important inter-State problem I had to deal with was in Assam and it engaged my attention from the moment I took over till I left Home." Chavan examined the respective claims of the States and found that it would not be easy to bring the parties to an agreement. A crisis occurred in the border area when Nagas encroached into Assam and put up huts with the idea of settling there. Explaining the developments, he 'said': "In the process of setting up these hutments, forests in the border areas were destroyed. The Assam police pushed the Nagas back into Nagaland. Encroachments by Nagas and police action against them occurred many times." The Home Minister tried to arrange a meeting between the Chief Ministers of the two States, "but it was a ticklish problem, involving strong emotions and sentiments on both sides." The two governments insisted that a meeting of the chief secretaries of the two States should take place first. "A tentative agreement was reached by the chief secretaries, but they could not solve the dispute, as political issues were involved."

The Home Minister 'said' that the Nagaland government wanted the Government of India to appoint a boundary commission, but "we could not appoint a com-

mission, nor could we say 'no'. We wanted the boundary as it legally existed to be marked on the ground, so that an assessment of the extent of the disputed territory could be made. The Nagaland government did not allow this. Our main concern was to restore peace and order in the area. The dispute could not be resolved, but we were able to contain it and prevent it from exploding into a very serious crisis. The dispute still remains a ticklish one and requires careful handling." As Home Minister, Chavan had to deal with not only inter-State disputes but also differences between regions within the same State. The formation of Nagaland encouraged other hill tribes in north-eastern India to demand separate States for themselves. The British believed that the proper way to develop the people of the area was to divide them into small groups. Robert Reid, the last British Governor of Assam, said that "...if control is ever to be decided upon in the future, it may well be that a scheme for establishing a number of small States may have to be considered." Some of the hill tribes received preferential treatment from the British who encouraged missionaries to go to the area and convert the hill people to Christianity. Today the majority of the people of the area is Christian.

The peculiar social and political situation in the frontier area forced the Government of India to follow more or less the British policy of giving limited autonomy to the districts. The formation of Nagaland was preceded by intense violent agitation by the Nagas under the direction of the Naga Peoples' Convention led by Phizo, the legendary Naga leader. The birth of Nagaland showed rewards and encouraged them to make demands for autonomy for their territories.

The hill people feared that they would not get a fair deal from the people of the valley and did not want to remain in Assam. The All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) founded in 1960 led the struggle for separation. The leaders of the APHLC blamed Assam for the ethnic backwardness of the hill areas. The Assam valley found they were surrounded on all sides.

people demanding secession and wanted to save the valley from anti-Assamese influence. In 1960 the Assam legislature passed a measure making Assamese the official language of the State—both in the hills and in the plain. The hill people thereupon strengthened the agitation for separation of all the hill districts from Assam. The APHLC, which spearheaded the agitation, was led by Captain Williamson Sangma, Professor G. G. Swell, and Nicholsroy. Nehru intervened and said that the hill districts could use English as the official language and their own dialects as medium of instruction in schools up to the primary stage. His suggestion was accepted by the APHLC. But there was difference of opinion on the issue among the hill leaders, and some radical elements left APHLC to form a body known as the Assam Hills People's Convention (AHPC).

The agitation gained momentum and assumed serious proportions in 1965. In March the Government appointed a commission under H. V. Pataskar to investigate charges of discrimination shown by the Assam government against the hill areas. Chavan stepped into this thorny area when feelings between the people of the hills and the plains had become bitter.

The hill people decided on a programme of direct action, scheduled to start on January 17, 1967. In the first week of January the Home Minister held consultations with the leaders and produced a plan for great autonomy for the hills. The nucleus of the plan which had already existed in the pigeon holes of the Home Ministry was pulled out and given a new shape. Chavan's formula was for the formation of a separate hill State as part of a regional federation in which Assam and the hill districts (Khasi-Jaintia, Mizo, North Cachar, Mikir Hills and Garo Hills) would be the two constituent units with equal status and with separate legislative assembly and council of ministers. A limited number of essential subjects of common interest would be assigned to the regional federation.

Chavan hoped that in course of time all other administrative units in the eastern region—Nagaland, NEFA, Manipur and Tripura—would join the federation. His suggestion was prompted by considerations of "the geography and the imperative need for security and co-

ordinated development of the area as a whole." It was provisionally accepted by the APHLC leaders, who wanted to contact the underground Mizo National Front to win their support. But Chavan told them that just for the sake of negotiations, the Government could not surrender its right to deal properly with those who were up in arms against it. He ruled out any contact with rebels.

The Home Minister's tribulations were not over. An APHLC conference held on January 18 did not enthusiastically respond to his federal plan. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) also rejected it outright. His efforts were thereafter directed towards disengaging the two parts of his proposals—federation and separation—and seeking the APCC's acceptance for forming a separate hill State.

Chavan did not give up his efforts. The Government had recognized the distinct political personality of the hill areas and he worked towards the establishment of an arrangement which would give practical shape to it. "But the whole procedure of preparing the minds of people for a new set-up was very tricky", he said, "and I had to spend quite a lot of my time in sorting out the problems." Finally, after months of patient negotiations and with everybody's consent and goodwill, a new political entity named Meghalaya was formed with the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo districts. North Cachar decided not to join and chose to remain with Assam. "The statesmanlike attitude of Captain Williamson Sangma, Professor Swell, and Nicholasroy was helpful in reaching a solution", said the Home Minister. His method of negotiation created confidence in the minds of the hill leaders about the Government's intentions, and he showed considerable skill in bringing together the two opposing parties and persuading them to agree to his formulae for a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

Another area where regional imbalances and economic disparities sparked off the demand for a separate State was Telangana in Andhra Pradesh. Telangana, consisting of nine districts including Hyderabad, is a backward area. In January 1969 students in Hyderabad, the capital of the State, began an agitation demanding the implementation of the statutory safeguards given to

Telangana in 1958 by the Government of India under a Presidential order. Under these safeguards forty per cent of the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet posts were to go to Telangana members of the legislature and one-third of the expenditure on Central and general administration was to be in the nine districts. A regional committee composed of members of the State legislature and MPs was set up by the Government of India to ensure the implementation of the safeguards.

While one group of agitators wanted the immediate implementation of the safeguards, another demanded a separate Telangana State. A counter-agitation by non-Telangana (Andhra) students was marked by violence, and the Army had to be called in to help the civil authorities to maintain law and order. The agitation continued all through 1969 and threatened the stability of the Andhra Pradesh Congress government led by Brahmananda Reddi. Konda Lakshman Bapuji, a senior minister in the State Cabinet, who stood for greater regional autonomy for Telangana within the State, resigned in protest against the State government's failure to find a solution. He and sixteen other leaders of the Telangana Praja Samiti which conducted the agitation for greater autonomy were arrested. With the resignation from the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet of eight ministers belonging to the Telangana region, the crisis deepened. The pulls and pressures inside the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee added fuel to the agitation. Chavan went twice to Hyderabad to seek a settlement. He said "When I came on the scene, the agitation was a height. I started a dialogue with the leaders, which ultimately failed."

The Chief Minister sent his resignation to the Government. But the board did not accept it and wanted him to implement the safeguards. He reconstituted his Cabinet and appointed a minister from Telangana as the deputy Chief Minister. The demand for a separate State continued by the Telangana Praja Samiti under leadership of Dr. Chenna Reddi, a former Union minister, and Konda Lakshman Bapuji. They argued that the issue was political and could not be solved by economic adjustments.

While the Government of India realized the danger,

the emergence of sub-regional demands for autonomy, felt strongly that backward regions in the States would get a fair deal from the State governments. Chafed that if sub-regional demands for statehood were conceded "this may lead to mushrooming of sub-regions all over." When he was asked about his views on the reorganization of States, he said: "The creation of linguistic States was inevitable. It was a basic need, it is what I honestly feel. But personally I am not starting another game of reorganization of States. Let such experiment has given us enough trouble. Let me make this clear that I disapproved of the neglect of the developed areas and the scant respect some of the governments give to the special social and economic problems of these areas. The shifts and pulls of politics, or for that matter, politics at the Centre would not lead to neglect of less developed areas and would not be allowed to breed discontent in certain regions of the people."

in the midst of seeking settlement of regional and inter-State disputes, the Home Minister piloted many important legislative measures some of which had eluded Parliament for long. One was the Official Languages Amendment Bill. Another measure which created considerable stir in Parliament was the Unlawful Activities (Amendment) Bill. The bill was a sequel to the recent amendment of the Constitution which permitted the Government to impose "reasonable restrictions" on the right to freedom of speech and expression. The Government piloted many other bills and moved for adoption of Parliament hundreds of motions on subjects ranging from proclamation of President's rule in the States amending the Indian Penal Code. As he himself said, he spent most of his time in Parliament in 1967 ("I most lived there."), piloting bills and answering questions on all kinds of subjects. "Will the Minister for the Affairs be pleased to state/refer...." would be beginning of about a fourth of all the questions asked by the MPs during the question hour. Some of the questions picked at random from the Rajya Sabha records for four months in 1968 were:

relief and
amb-Jaurian

film artistes, use of Defence of India Rules, Pakistan High Commission's letter implicating Atulya Ghosh, volunteer organizations of political parties, bomb explosion at Santiniketan, adjournment of the Punjab legislature, leave rules of Supreme Court Judges, giving titles to Indian scientists, selection of secretaries, increase of expenditure of Raj Bhavans, investigations against the Private Secretary to the deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Malder's book 'CIA—Who is Who', Pakistani espionage activities in Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan, use of foreign money in elections.

1967 was a fruitful year for Chavan. He emerged as a confident leader and a good parliamentarian, marching "from triumph to triumph." He was "the most overworked occupant of the treasury benches this season, such being the nature of his charge, and he picks up more trophies on each outing. His reply to the debate on the Home Ministry's demands was masterly.... It was the best heard for some years from a Home Minister." Giving the reasons for Chavan's success, "The Statesman"³ added that he was a gifted speaker and "though his speeches are not exactly uttered with colourful phrases, what makes them effective is the remarkable aplomb and stolidity with which he tackles troublesome issues and the timing and tone of his remarks."

Some of the commentators went into ecstasies over Chavan's performance during the winter session of Parliament in 1967. A writer in 'The Indian Express'⁴ said it was "Mr. Y. B. Chavan's session.... If MPs returning home wake up dreaming of the Home Minister, the fault will not be that of the latter. He virtually carried the session on his shoulders.... When Chavan took over as Defence Minister in 1962 his voice was hardly audible and he seemed shy and self-conscious and not sure of himself. He has blossomed into one of the finest speakers on the treasury benches."

When Chavan assumed charge of the Home portfolio in November 1966 he did not expect that he would be required to perform diplomatic exercises. The tensions

3. September 7, 1967.

4. December 29, 1967.

between the Centre and the States and the disputes between the States themselves were such that they demanded delicate and diplomatic handling. Restraint and pragmatism were his main virtues. His capacity to understand and appreciate the point of view of the opposition earned him the respect of all sections of MPs, and his ability to handle with great composure even the most difficult situation made him one of the most respected leaders of the Congress. He emerged as a massively self-assured leader.

Chavan told the Lok Sabha a fortnight after he became Home Minister that what worried him more than the political and economic problems was the challenge posed by communalism to India's secularism and national unity. The dialogue between Hindus and Muslims, the two major religious communities in India, which had broken down long before the partition of India in 1947 was never resumed. All the tragedy of the communal killings that followed the partition, Gandhi's martyrdom, and Nehru's crusade in favour of secularism did not remove the antagonism between the two communities. Chavan thought that communalism in India had a fascist character, and 'said' that 'if we allow these tendencies to grow—whether Hindu communalism, Muslim communalism, or provincial chauvinism—we are preparing the ground for dictatorship in this country. All these forces create power-structures that tend to destroy the political system in India. Indeed, we face a serious and ever-present threat from communal forces."

Although he had known the dangers of communalism a decade and a half ago when he was parliamentary secretary in Bombay, as Home Minister he now came face to face with the threat in all its ugly manifestations. Music before mosques, religious processions, desecration of Muslim graveyards, and agitation against the slaughter of cows are some of the traditional causes that lead to the communal tensions. In the past decades the least number of communal clashes occurred in 1960

when only 26 incidents were recorded. But after riots in Jabalpur in 1961, the graph of communal disturbances went up. The highest number was in 1964 when it rose to 1,070. In 1965 and 1966 there were few incidents. But in 1967 and succeeding years there was again a spate of communal violence, the character of which was different from the earlier manifestations of the malaise.

In August 1967 a week-long communal riot occurred in Ranchi in Bihar State, in which 155 lives were lost. The origin of the disturbances was traced to an anonymous anti-Urdu, anti-Muslim pamphlet. Chavan rushed to the riot-stricken area and conferred with Bihar ministers on the measures to restore normal life. He assured the State government all help. The Army was instructed to assist the civil authorities, and the Central Reserve Police (CRP) was kept in constant readiness. His visit to riot-hit Ranchi and his talks with Bihar ministers led to stern measures against riotous acts.

About the same time, communal tension reared its head in Srinagar for the first time after independence. The marriage of one Parameshwari Devi, a young Hindu girl who became Parvin Akhtar after her marriage with a Muslim, was the immediate provocation. Soon after his visit to Ranchi, Chavan rushed to Kashmir and conferred with leaders of both the Hindu and Muslim communities and with the State ministers. The month-long agitation was suspended in response to his appeal for the restoration of normal conditions. He had a good word to say about the Muslim leaders in Kashmir, including those of the Plebiscite Front, who he said had acquitted themselves "very correctly" during the trouble. 'Patriot' wrote that but for Chavan's efforts "the tangle would not have been solved easily."

Within a month of the incidents in Ranchi and Srinagar, communal riots broke out in Jainpur and Suchetpur in Uttar Pradesh (September 24-25) and in three places in Maharashtra—Ahmednagar (September 18), Sholapur (September 17) and Malegaon (September 24). Chavan told an anxious Lok Sabha that the Government found that political leaders were responsible for aggra-

vating communal tensions and added that 'what was of
 serious concern to his Government was that officials on
 whom it depended for putting down the disturbances
 were also affected to an extent by communal feelings.
 In 1967 there was a marked increase in the number
 of communal clashes in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and
 Uttar Pradesh. In the first quarter of 1968 three seri-
 ous disturbances occurred in Meerut, Karimganj, and
 Allahabad. Kerala and Mysore which were till then
 comparatively free from communal disturbances were
 also affected. Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, and West
 Bengal were the worst affected States in 1968. The State
 governments and political parties seemed helpless to
 arrest the growth of communal antagonisms. Whenever
 communal riots took place, the State governments as
 well as the intellectual and political elite in India adop-
 ted an ostrich-like attitude of putting the blame on
 'goonda' elements and on the inefficiency of the local
 administration. Though anti-social, 'goonda' elements
 had a hand in the riots, the politicians who traded on
 communal passions were often behind these distur-
 bances.

On September 18, 1969 an ugly communal riot broke
 out in Ahmedabad in Gujarat. It lasted ten days and
 resulted in 503 deaths and loss of property worth Rs. 4.14
 crores. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the grand old leader
 of Pakhtoons in West Pakistan and close associate of
 Gandhi, who was on a visit to India at the invitation of
 the Government, went on a three-day fast on October 3
 to rouse the conscience of Indians against violence. The
 year 1969 was indeed a bad one as far as communal har-
 mony was concerned. The annual report of the Home
 Ministry for the year showed that 519 communal inci-
 dents took place in 1969, registering an increase of 50
 per cent over the 1968 figures. The States most affect-
 ed were Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh,
 Kerala, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh.

Chavan's analysis of the communal disturbances was
 that the attitude of political parties which used one re-
 ligious community or caste against another was mainly
 responsible for the riots. He 'said' that until 1960 there
 was "an effort to democratize the politics of different
 communities." But after 1960 political parties whipped

up religious sentiments to gain narrow political ends.

He accused the Jan Sangh of being mainly responsible for the psychology behind the communal temper in the country and said that it was wrong to brand one community less patriotic than the other.⁷ In the course of a debate in the Lok Sabha, he described himself a good Hindu, but spoke bitterly of the inequalities that had crept into the Hindu social structure. He referred to Balraj Madhok, the Jan Sangh leader's book on 'Indianization' of Muslims and called it a "futile exercise in perverting history." Chavan emerged as a tireless crusader for secularism and a stout defender of the rights of the minorities. He did his best to stop the tide of communal passions, but often without success. The deep-seated malaise erupted again and again.

The communal carnage that took place in May 1970 in Bhiwandi and Jalgaon in Maharashtra shocked the nation. After a visit to the riot-stricken area, Chavan said that there was total breakdown of communication between the two communities. He said the Intelligence Bureau (IB) was aware of the communal tensions in the area and had informed the State authorities of it. Long before the riots broke out, communal propaganda had been carried on by political parties in Bhiwandi, and before the riots began, anti-Muslim slogans were raised by Hindu processionists. He said that several brutal attacks had been made on Muslims, and all the houses burnt down were those of Muslims.

At a meeting of the National Integration Council in May 1970, Chavan was appointed chairman of the committee to organize a nation-wide mass campaign for communal harmony. He planned to visit all the States affected by communal tensions, and his tour was "the first of its kind undertaken by a member of the Union Cabinet." On June 22 he visited Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) and had detailed discussions with the State ministers, district officials, social workers, editors, legislators and representatives of various interests. He said that the Government had come to the conclusion that all the

7. The Jan Sangh doubted the patriotism of the Muslim masses and wanted Muslims to be "Indianized".

8. The two words, not found in any dictionary, mean "regional and linguistic fanaticism."

denn the Shiv Sena. He called it a "pernicious fascist Chavan was the first Congress leader to publicly con- used by them to their political advantage.

that the regional enthusiasm generated by it could be Congress leaders even hobnobbed with it in the hope not pay attention to the growth of the Shiv Sena. Some bay. In the beginning the Maharashtra government did shops and establishments run by south Indians in Bom- tion, the Shiv Sena held demonstrations and looted the opportunities. Aided by a militant volunteer organiza- responsible for depriving Maharashtrians of employment who, according to the leaders of the Shiv Sena, were the large scale influx into Maharashtra of south Indians receive priority in all matters in the State and resented rashtrians.' It demanded that Maharashtrians should prominence with the slogan of 'Maharashtra for Maha- bay. In mid-1966 this regional organization came into He made a specific reference to the Shiv Sena in Bom- sive tendencies became a threat to peace.

governments to take strong action wherever these divi- He told the Rajya Sabha that he had urged the State of the twin tendencies of "regionalism and linguism."⁸ loping a national consensus against the menacing growth Minister spoke again and again about the need for deve- Assam, Bengal, Orissa, and Maharashtra. The Home 1967 and 1968 in many parts of India, particularly in munalism, which generated a great deal of violence in regional and linguistic fanaticism, as dangerous as com- Another grave problem the Home Minister faced was and in the paramount need for national unity. sed an opportunity to stress his deep faith in secularism ed at bringing the communities together and never mis- tained to take personal interest in all the measures aim- India and had to discontinue his tour. However, he con- visit other centres, he became the Finance Minister of challenge posed by communal forces. Before he could was required at non-governmental levels to meet the by other conferences were inadequate, and more effort dations made by the National Integration Council and measures taken till then in pursuance of the recommen-

movement." Addressing a meeting of the Progressive Group in Bombay in August 1967, he said that when the unilingual State of Maharashtra was formed the Congress and all other parties associated with its formation did not think of considering only those born in Marathi-speaking families as Maharashtrians. He said that all those who had made Maharashtra their home were Maharashtrians. Bal Thackeray, the founder-leader of the Shiv Sena, condemned Chavan's attitude and "lashed out at all leaders who opposed Shiv Sena, including Mr. Y. B. Chavan...."⁹

On February 20, 1969 Chavan told Parliament that neither the Congress nor the Maharashtra government was a friend of "this strange type of fascism that has come to the fore." A month later he told an audience in Bombay that every Indian should be ashamed of the pernicious ideology of the Shiv Sena and added that every one had the right to seek employment in any part of India. He said he felt sick and sad over the Shiv Sena's demonstration. In 1970 he held the Shiv Sena responsible for the communal disturbances in Bhiwandi and Jalgaon and said it had done the greatest harm to Maharashtra. "I have always suffered at the hands of the Shiv Sena.... Its stand was against the very basic concept of India and of all human values." He sharply criticized the attitude of a section of Hindus who encouraged factionalism and regionalism, and he believed that the communal trouble in Bhiwandi began with the propaganda "which made certain minorities suspect in the minds of the majority." He, however, connected the movement in Maharashtra with the basic socio-economic conditions in India which encouraged the growth of fanatic, regional tendencies. He said that although the origins of these tendencies could be traced to socioeconomic factors, their expression was "some sort of an aberration, and the Shiv Sena was this sort of an aberration" in Maharashtra.

Chavan's critics have never been tired of accusing him of supporting the Shiv Sena and have carried on a whispering campaign in Delhi against him. People in Bombay know of his uncompromising fight against the Shiv

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 Lok Sabha: "...what I say in Mahatashtra about these
 matters does not make national news. What is said
 against me in Parliament becomes national news. That
 is my misfortune."

Violence generated by communal passions and regional
 and linguistic loyalties is only a part of the pervading
 atmosphere of violence in Indian society. Agitations
 by political parties, demonstrations by students, strikes
 and stoppages of work by industrial workers and govern-
 ment employees, and uprisings by peasants gave rise to
 considerable violence in the past decade. Sociologists
 have tried to explain that a minimum level of violence
 is inevitable in a free and rapidly changing society and
 that the very nature of modern life with its complex
 pulls and pressures tends to create violence. Further-
 more, rapid urbanization and industrialization and the
 hardships that arise from needs outstripping facilities
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The Home Minister was deeply concerned about the
 climate of violence in all spheres of life. He believed
 that mere enforcement of law and order would not solve
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 Home Minister was that of a rough police boss, he was
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Chavan's critics have never been tired of accusing him of supporting the Shiv Sena and have carried on a whispering campaign in Delhi against him. People in Bombay know of his uncompromising fight against the Shiv

Sena, but not those outside Bombay. Those who are jealous of his position and prestige are behind the campaign, which has succeeded to an extent in abridging his reputation. When he addressed a public meeting in Connaught Place, New Delhi during the election campaign in February 1971, a Delhi citizen asked the writer whether the speaker was the same "Shiv Senawallah Chavan". Chavan is more sad than angry over these accusations, because he has no way of countering it. The record of the public speeches made by him as well as by the Shiv Sena leaders proves that his critics are misinformed or malicious. He said in anguish in the Lok Sabha: "...what I say in Maharashtra about these matters does not make national news. What is said against me in Parliament becomes national news. That is my misfortune."

Violence generated by communal passions and regional and linguistic loyalties is only a part of the pervading atmosphere of violence in Indian society. Agitations by political parties, demonstrations by students, strikes and stoppages of work by industrial workers and government employees, and uprisings by peasants gave rise to considerable violence in the past decade. Sociologists have tried to explain that a minimum level of violence is inevitable in a free and rapidly changing society and that the very nature of modern life with its complex pulls and pressures tends to create violence. Furthermore, rapid urbanization and industrialization and the hardships that arise from needs outstripping facilities generate violence.

The Home Minister was deeply concerned about the climate of violence in all spheres of life. He believed that mere enforcement of law and order would not solve the problem and that the imbalances and inadequacies which caused discontent and frustration had to be set right. Although the public image of Chavan as Home Minister was that of a rough police boss, he was far from happy whenever he had to crack the whip. His background and thinking made him search in the back alleys and bylanes of economic and social life for the causes and course of violence in the streets. He was totally unfit to be a police minister, for he was too objective and analytical to have a one-track mind.

He went into the root causes of violence, of the inner tensions behind the outbreak of disorders. He 'said': "We examined the problem not merely from the point of view of law and order but also from the angle of its social implications. We undertook studies to determine the root causes of violence, the sociological and economic factors underlying it. It was on the basis of these studies that I projected my policies." He activated the Research and Policy Division of the Home Ministry, and conducted a series of studies in depth on violence and agrarian unrest.

Even before the Home Ministry made the study, agrarian unrest in West Bengal had exploded into a violent uprising in Naxalbari in 1967. What has now come to be known as Naxalbari comprises an area of 300 sq. miles with a population of about 150,000 in the jurisdiction of the police stations of Naxalbari, Kharabari, Phansidewa in the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling district. Since 1966 preparations under the direction of the CPI(M) for an armed agrarian struggle had been on in this area. Promode Das Gupta, Hare Krishna Konar, and Ganesh Ghose, leaders of the CPI(M), made frequent visits to the area to strengthen the local peasants' unions. The party decided to start an agitation after the general elections in 1967, when it expected the Congress government would come to power in West Bengal. But to its great surprise, the CPI(M) found itself to be a partner in the United Front government elected in March 1967.

Against the wishes of the CPI(M) leaders in Calcutta, local leaders in Naxalbari area decided to go ahead with their projected revolt. Chavan 'said': "The extreme leftists in the Marxist party in Naxalbari started a movement which gave rise to a new political phraseology, a new word in the political dictionary—naxalite. It represented an ideology which definitely showed resonance with the Chinese leadership and its techniques. They functioned on the frontiers of India, their movement became a little more significant, a little more sinister." The situation in Naxalbari in 1967 was ripe for armed revolution. The majority of the people of the area were landless peasants and tribes of 'adivasis'—tribally meaning original inhabitants, which is an

euphemism for tribals), exploited by the 'jotedars' (landowners leasing land to sharecroppers) who provided them seeds, ploughs, bullocks, and food and took away the major portion of the crops, upto 70 per cent. The chronic agrarian unrest in West Bengal, particularly in Naxalbari area, had engaged the attention of previous ministries. Even as early as 1954 the Congress Government passed the Estate Acquisition Act which limited agricultural landholdings to 25 acres. But as in the case of other States, the implementation of the law was tardy and ineffective. It was more so in the neglected Naxalbari area. While in all other parts of West Bengal, holdings above 25 acres came under government control for distribution among the landless peasants, in the tea gardens of Naxalbari a large part of the land used for non-cash crops was retained by estate owners and used for the cultivation of rice. In these areas the labourers worked under conditions which were described as a state of cruel slavery.

Disputes over the landlord's share of the crop and of wrongful eviction of tillers snowballed into a serious agrarian unrest by 1966. After the U.F. government was formed in 1967, Hare Krishna Konar, the CPI(M) Revenue Minister, undertook a programme of quick distribution of surplus land and prohibition of evictions. But these measures came too late. The extremist communist leaders like Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, and Charu Mazumdar defied the leaders of the State CPI(M) and began a movement of forcible occupation of the land of the 'jotedars' and its distribution to the landless peasants.

The first serious disturbance in Naxalbari occurred on March 2, 1967, the day the CPI(M) assumed office as a constituent of the U.F. government in Calcutta. In May a violent clash occurred between the landless peasants and the police, in which a policeman and nine tribals lost their lives. After the incident there was total breakdown of law and order, and a situation bordering on anarchy existed in the area. When P. Sundarayya, the general secretary of the CPI(M), and Prasad Das Gupta visited Siliguri, the extremist leader refused to meet them. Hare Krishna Konar was singled out by the extremists for attack as an agent of 'jot

dars'. The CPI(M) thereafter expelled the extremists from the party. But the storm did not subside.

On June 12, 1967 Ajoy Mukherjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, said that "they (extremists) have let loose a reign of terror, forcing the local people to submit to them." Chavan informed the Lok Sabha the next day that a "state of serious lawlessness existed in Naxalbari." He assured Parliament that the Government would take all the steps necessary to bring the situation under control. Meanwhile, in the second week of June, the West Bengal government sent a six-member ministerial team to the area to appeal to the rebels to end unlawful activities by June 21. When the disturbances continued beyond that date, the government extended the time limit till July 12. The violent uprising continued and the West Bengal government put it down by strong police action. Jangal Santhal and some other leaders were arrested, but Kanu Sanyal and Charu Mazumdar escaped arrest. The movement went underground. The type of agitation conducted by the extremists in Naxalbari soon spread to other areas, and those who believed in the forcible occupation of land and in the use of force against the authorities came to be known as naxalites. In July 1967 Peking blessed the naxalite movement and said that Naxalbari was the "prelude to a violent revolution by hundreds of millions of people throughout India...."

A probe into the genesis of naxalism was attempted in the Lok Sabha in April 1969 when Inderjit Gupta of the CPI said that naxalism was born in the womb of the CPI(M) and that after it was born, the mother disowned the child and the child its mother. Highlighting the divisions in the communist movement in India, Chavan told the Lok Sabha that naxalism was born in the womb of the CPI(M) which in turn was born earlier in the womb of the CPI, "and therefore the problem now posed was that of the grandchild of the CPI."

The communist movement in India, formally launched in 1925, has passed through many phases. The CPI's failures in the mass fronts had driven many communists to armed struggle even in 1947. The party was committed by turns to a right reformist line under B. T. Ranadive till 1950, and a Maoist line under C.

Jeswara Rao till 1951. This was followed by a long period of internal conflict between a dominant moderate group which believed in parliamentary and peaceful transition to socialism as envisaged by Nikita Khrushchev in the twentieth Soviet Party Congress, and a radical group which advocated revolutionary methods. A few communist groups, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, had long ago turned to Mao Tse-tung and to the Chinese revolution as a model for India, and had said that Mao as formulated a theory of a new democracy, a new form of "revolutionary struggle to advance towards socialism in colonies and semi-colonies." But these groups did not make headway in the communist movement on account of the dominance of the moderate and centrist groups.

The power struggle led to growing tensions in the party, which became riven into two factions in 1960, after the ideological conflict between China and Russia had surfaced. The split was formally consummated when the party divided into two in 1964, after China and the CPI, was more militant and was initially pro-Peking in its orientation. The truth was the CPI(M) was not

pro-Peking, was not a rural-based party. As its strength increased in Parliament and State legislatures, its the armed revolution lost ground to that of capturing through constitutional means, of using parliamentary tactics to win communist goals. The revuls among large sections of the Indian people against China after the Sino-Indian conflict made Maoist thoughts popular amongst many members of the CPI(M). It is rather ambiguous stand of not openly support China and yet opposing the Soviet Union. Observers found it difficult to detect the polemical differences between CPI(M) and CPI. The CPI (M) very soon found its left Maoist groups with a pronounced rural base and with firm faith in a violent revolution. There were much groups in many parts of India, and Maoism of the areas where the Maoist group, the CPI(M). Earlier, a powerful and purposeful group had conducted a mass agrarian struggle in Pradesh.

Chavan told the Lok Sabha in November

shared the grave concern expressed in the House about the activities of the extremist groups and repeated his assurance that the Government would take steps to maintain the rule of law. He said that after the violent uprising in Naxalbari in 1967, many groups which believed in armed violence based on the doctrine of Mao Tse-tung had proclaimed their intention to launch revolutionary struggle. The Home Minister gave details of the activities of one of the groups which led an attack on two police stations in Kerala in which a policeman was speared to death. He also gave details of the assault on a police official in Muzzafarpur district in Bihar and of the armed riots by peasant groups in Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh. He informed the House that there was no central organization directing the activities of the different groups, but added that an all-India leadership might emerge.

Chavan was proved right. By the end of 1968 the revolutionary groups all over India were discussing a secret document distributed among them for internal debate. The 5,600-word document claimed the setting up of forty bases in eight out of sixteen States for training peasants in guerilla warfare. It said that more and more leaders were coming forward to carry on the liberation war after renouncing all family ties, and warned the revolutionaries against the emergence in their ranks of "Che Gueverish tendencies..." which had not succeeded in bringing socialism to Cuba. The document ended by saying that "the growth of newer revolutionary peasant bases will lead to the birth of a real revolutionary party in the country."

In October 1968 representatives of revolutionary groups from seven States met in an unpretentious suburban house in Calcutta. Disillusioned by the orthodoxy of the official communist parties, they decided to form a new communist party. The All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR), set up in May 1968, had proved ineffective in co-ordinating the activities of Maoists all over India. The October meeting passed a resolution which said that "a stage has now been reached when the formation of the communist party brooks no further delay." The resolution spoke of unity with "our class brethren who are waging

heroic struggles in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and various other countries of the world" and wanted to "forge that great bond of internationalism which has been given noble expression by Chairman Mao in the great proletarian cultural revolution." It further said that agrarian revolution will be the main content of the democratic revolution in India.

On December 5 Chavan told the informal consultative committee attached to his ministry that the activities of the revolutionary groups could not be met by police action alone, as they were connected with people's problems and grievances. He said they could be effectively dealt with only through political methods and by solving the problems faced by the people.¹⁰ A week later, on December 11 he informed the Lok Sabha that "there is no question of suppressing any legitimate mass movement against exploitation. But if anyone thinks in terms of an armed revolution, then it must certainly be suppressed."¹¹

Asked how the Centre proposed to deal with the movement, he said: "We made a study of the naxalite trouble and of the socio-economic conditions leading to it. I was trying to have a little more fundamental approach. The State governments are naturally lost in their individual, immediate problems. But we at the Centre have to look at them from the national perspective, and take a general view, and determine whether any remedies and corrections are possible and whether the Central Government can help the State governments." He was, however, faced with a legal and political dilemma in dealing with the activities of the naxalites. Neither the Centre nor the States had legal powers to ban a political organization except when it preached secession. He could not bring any legislation to put down the movement. "The Indian Express"¹² reported that the Prime Minister "did not agree with the Home Ministry's purely legalistic view that under existing laws the government had no powers to declare the activities of individuals who could not be identified as a party

10. *The Hindu*, December 6, 1968.
11. *The Times of India*, December 12, 1968.
12. *The Indian Express*, January 11, 1969.

or an association, unlawful." The Home Minister felt that at best action could be taken only by the States under the Preventive Detention Act, the Indian Penal Code, or the Criminal Procedure Code.

In 1969 differences arose among the revolutionary groups on many counts, and some of them broke away from the AICCCR. The first crack appeared in February 1969. Nagi Reddi, the Andhra leader, and his group were criticized by the AICCCR, because he had earlier condemned the Maoist attack on police stations in Kerala as counter-revolutionary. He was outflanked by more extremist factions, particularly in the tribal areas in Srikakulam district, which accepted Charu Mazumdar, the Naxalbari hero, as their leader. Nagi Reddi opposed the movement launched by Mazumdar's group in Andhra Pradesh, but the Srikakulam rebels forced the pace. He resigned from the Andhra Pradesh assembly in March 1969 to organize a "people's revolution", drew up a plan to liberate villages and encircle towns. But he and forty-three of his associates were arrested and the movement failed. The naxalite group in Srikakulam under the leadership of Vempatapu Satyanarayana, a school teacher turned revolutionary, enjoyed wide support among 'girijans' (mountain people) who were exploited for long by the people of the plains in Andhra Pradesh. The naxalite movement in Srikakulam made some gains before it was suppressed by the firm action taken by the Andhra Pradesh government.

It was in West Bengal that the movement gained momentum and posed a serious threat to the government. When the United Front ministry came back to power in West Bengal after the midterm poll in 1969, the CPI (M) again became one of the major constituents of the coalition government. It tried to woo the naxalite leaders. Jyoti Basu, the CPI (M) Home Minister, withdrew police cases against naxalites who faced charges of murder and other crimes. He released them, including Kanu Sanyal who was arrested during the President's rule. But all these measures made no difference in the attitude of the naxalite leaders, who condemned the CPI (M) leaders as agents of reaction.

Peking radio accused Hare Krishna Konar, the CPI (M) minister and former pro-Peking revolutionary, of

uppressing the naxalite movement. Eventually, the CPI (M) gave up its attempt to woo the naxalites. Pro- mode Das Gupta, the secretary of the Bengal unit of the CPI (M), contended that terrorism of the type preached by naxalites was not compatible with communism. He said: "If you want to teach them (naxalites) a lesson, it is not difficult to screen them out and hunt them in their houses." ¹³ Jyoti Basu told newsmen that he did not understand why the naxalites were afraid of the CRP being posted in the troubled areas. He remarked that even if the CRP were posted, "why should they (naxalites) be afraid, since they believe that everything will be done by the barrel of the gun. Guns are the same. Do they think that CRP guns are more powerful?" ¹⁴ Finally P. Sundarayya, the general secretary of the CPI (M), accused naxalites of being the agents of the "invisible arm of American imperialism and capitalist reaction."

Chavan informed Parliament that at a meeting organized by the extremists in observance of May Day in Calcutta in 1969, Kanu Sanyal had announced that a communist party had been formed on April 22, 1969. At this meeting Sanyal had emphasized that the new party would follow the teachings of Mao Tse-tung and announced that it would be called the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). Asit Sen, who presided over the meeting, had declared that only the Communist Party of China would give a correct leadership for the emancipation of the oppressed people throughout the world and that the Indian revolutionaries should take a cue from China and her leader, Mao Tse-tung.

Naxalite activities soon spread to many other States, and groups of revolutionaries in different parts of India accepted the leadership and guidance of the Communist Party of China. But their expectation of large-scale aid from Peking did not materialize, for the Chinese stand was that massive external assistance would destroy the indigenous character of the movement. Nevertheless, there was evidence of guidance and assistance from

13. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, May 13, 1969.
14. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, May 3, 1969.

external sources. "All available indications have clearly pointed to a western capital as the central point of contact between the Indian extremists and the Peking-oriented communists who appear to have used the city for funnelling funds as well as sending instructions to the CPI (M-L) cadres."¹⁵

The first congress of the CPI (M-L) was held on May 15 and 16, 1970 at an undisclosed place in Calcutta. According to 'Deshabrati', the underground Bengali weekly published by CPI (M-L), the resolution passed by the congress listed the formation of a people's army under its leadership as one of the three main tasks before the party. The other two were the forging of a united front of all revolutionary groups engaged in armed struggle and the strengthening of the party by the method of "criticism and self-criticism and link with the mass of the people." The ultimate aim of the party was defined as the realization of socialism and communism. The resolution passed by the congress said that "to overthrow the rule of the enemies of the people, the CPI (M-L) places the path of armed struggle before the Indian people. It rejects the parliamentary path for the whole of the strategic period." Charu Mazumdar became the chairman of the party.

The all India strength of the party cadres at the beginning of 1971 was believed to be about 25,000, of which 6,000 were in West Bengal. The party's strongholds were West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, the Punjab, and Orissa. The sources of its strength were the students, the academic community, and the peasants. It has also infiltrated into the trade unions. The secretary-general of the national defence workers federation, R. N. Pathak alleged that *naxalites* had infiltrated into defence establishments in many parts of the country, including West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.¹⁶

In mid-1970 serious differences cropped up in the top leadership of the CPI (M-L) over the party's programme. According to police sources, the differences centred over the CPI (M-L)'s programme of annihilation of class

15. *The Statesman*, November 4, 1970.

16. *Assam Tribune*, July 20, 1970.

attacks on members of the CPI (M) in West Bengal. It was noted that no member of the CPI was a victim of naxalite attacks. Some observers wondered whether it was by accident or design that the naxalites attacked the CPI (M) members and not the right reactionaries of the Jan Sangh and Congress parties and whether there was any liaison between the naxalites, the CPI and the establishment.

Chavan was singled out for attack by the naxalites. In February 1969 naxalite posters in red print appeared in Delhi asking him to release Kanu Sanyal and Janga Santhal or face the fate of Gen. O'Dwyer. Chavan wanted to hold talks with the Opposition leaders in Parliament on the measures to meet the challenge posed by the naxalites. But the CPI, SSP, and CPI (M) declined to attend the meeting called by Chavan, not because these parties approved of the activities of the naxalite groups but because they were afraid of the adverse reaction among their own rank and file over any stand against naxalites.

In Chavan's opinion the situation in Naxalbari was symbolic of today's India. He 'said': "The naxalite problem is a historic development and springs from differences in ideology. The naxalites feel that India is now ripe and mature for a violent revolution. The question that I had to face was how to deal with the trouble. It is today a new ideological approach to an agrarian problem. The basis of naxalism today is ideological. The naxalites started the movement in rural areas, because Mao started his revolution in rural China. The naxalites are using Mao technique and Mao philosophy, but they have also certain strategic considerations. They selected an area which was close to an international border, with Nepal on one side, Pakistan on the other and with China close by. All the while the idea that weighed on their minds was that arms could be smuggled from China and they would be able to create a psychological atmosphere of revolution. But they have not so far succeeded in making an impact."

Asked about the future of the naxalite movement, he 'said':¹⁷ "The problem as such is still there, in Calcutta

17. In interview on December 13, 1970.

and other areas. We cannot say it has disappeared. It is still there. The Government is trying to bring the situation under control and the administration is very active. But the basic issue is to remove the causes that give rise to such activities. Wherever exploitation exists, we will have to remove it, remove the causes. It has got to be done. Such ideologies take root in conditions of exploitation and injustice. That is why we place more and more emphasis on the progressive programmes of the Congress."

2. January 8, 1967.

1. A columnist in *The Hindustan Times*, July 20, 1967

after the general elections, he became convinced that the State did not contain any reference to them. But ed and Chavan's electioneering campaign in 1967 in In Maharashtra the role of the princes was very limited should be abolished.

forward the demand that privy purses of the princes Atulya Ghosh, the treasurer of the AICC, had also put she had criticised the role of some of the princes. into politics, and during the election campaign in 1967 Minister was not happy about the influx of the princes loyalties." But this was far from the truth. The Prime advisers to build a personal following based on caste gress is the anxiety of some of the Prime Minister's "behind their (princes) present influx into the Congress the party discovered a radical streak in her, said that ing the CPI attitude towards the Prime Minister before ments in the Congress on their guard. "Link,"² reflect ment and many State legislatures put the radical ele independence, and their sudden appearance in Parliat the politics of the land in the first nineteen years of gress and Swatantra parties. The princes had kept off turned to the Lok Sabha with the support of the Congress and Swatantra parties. The princes had kept off general elections in 1967 against the privileges of the princes, grew in volume after many princes were re- ticians. The rumblings of protest, heard during the ed feudalism and has invited censure from radical poli- The maharaja has always been a symbol of outmod- for this demand."¹

presumptuousness to claim a massive popular backing by a snap vote and that "it would be the height of immediately pointed out that the amendment was passed tion was adopted unanimously. Critics of the Congress The AICC office records show that the amended resolution when the voting on the amendment took place. sent the AICC attended the session, and only 25 were pre- of democracy." Only 315 out of the 755 members of which were "incongruous with the concept and practice ument to do away with the privileges and privy purses and 4 against it. The amendment called upon the Gov- at the far end of the session with 17 votes in favour

in the interests of social justice, the power of the prince which stemmed from their privy purses and the high esteem they continued to command in their localities should be curbed. He, therefore, took a leading role in getting the amendment passed at the AICC session. Rajinder Puri, in his column in 'The Hindustan Times' said that "the strategist who has so skilfully masterminded the move to abolish the privy purses, of course is Mr. Chavan."

Soon after the AICC session in Delhi, there were protests even inside the Congress against the manner in which the amended resolution was passed. Some AICC members were opposed to the resolution and said that it had received only a thin majority. S. K. Patil, one of the members of the CWC, described the resolution as "stark madness", and Morarji Desai, the deputy Prime Minister, called it a breach of faith. Asked about the criticism by the Congress leaders, Chavan 'said': "Who could help it? The Prime Minister cannot in later. The motion was moved to get the amendment passed, and naturally those who were interested in it remained behind. Others who took the Congress casually left."

There was a heated debate inside the Congress for quite some time between those who wanted immediate abolition of the privy purses and those who felt it should not be rushed through. Some of the Cabinet ministers thought they were being hustled and forced to accept the resolution. Chavan 'said': "The Prime Minister herself had that feeling, but she was not against it. The newspapers were making a wrong guess that the Prime Minister was not interested in the resolution. She, however, felt that the decision to abolish the purses should have been taken by the AICC with greater respect for democratic procedures.⁴

The resolution put the Prime Minister in an embarrassing

3. July 20, 1967.

4. Three years later, in September 1970, while speaking in the Rajya Sabha on the bill to abolish the privileges and privy purses, the Prime Minister said it was true she was "a little disturbed" when the AICC passed the resolution and remarked that this was because of the "manner of its passing."

ing position. Her assiduous cultivation of a radical image did not permit her to oppose the move, but the political consequences likely to flow from it prevented her from giving full support to it. The Congress governments in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Mysore were receiving considerable support from the princes. She was reluctant to take an inflexible stand on the issue and lose the support of the princes. She also thought that the abolition of the privy purses would reduce the confidence of the people at home and abroad in the pledged word of the Government. The written demand made by some Congress MPs for the immediate abolition of the privy purses embarrassed her all the more.

In view of the criticism against the resolution, the matter was brought up again at the Jabalpur session of the AICC. The session confirmed the resolution, and it became the accepted programme of the Congress, one of the items of the ten-point economic programme. Chavan said: "Some announcement had to be made on the subject, and the Government became committed." When the issue came up for discussion in Parliament, all the leftists in the Opposition and some Congress members supported the programme.

The debate in the Lok Sabha on the issue gave Chavan an opportunity to restate the Government's view and in the process prove his parliamentary skill as a forthright speaker. While endorsing the demand for abolishing the privy purses and privileges, he said those who opposed the measure were the classical reactionary elements in the country—the Jan Sangh, the Swatantra, and the princes. During the debate Balraj Madhok, the Jan Sangh leader, said Indira Gandhi had no claim to the post of Prime Minister except as the daughter of Nehru and upheld the claim of the princes to inherit the privileges and privy purses of the former rulers. She heard the remark in silence, but the gallant Home Minister came to her rescue. He said that the Prime Minister, who was the leader of the House and the leader of the country in her own

position not on a covenant as the princes did but on the will of the people.

In a hard-hitting speech in the Rajya Sabha, he said that the law provided for the equality of all citizens and asked: "Could a person who received Rs. 150 a month, including dearness allowance, claim to have equal rights with those who received lakhs of rupees, tax free in perpetuity? Could a republic justify the existence of two classes of citizens?" During the debate many speakers referred to the commitments the Government had made to the princes and the guarantees given to them by the Constitution.⁶ In reply to the critics, Chavan said: "We are committed to providing the people jobs, education, decent living conditions. What about commitments?... The decision is clear. The course is set."

In September 1967 the Cabinet decided to negotiate with the former rulers. The general view in the Cabinet at that time was that the privileges should be ended forthwith and that instead of abrogating the privy purses all at once, a method should be found for their phased abolition. Chavan said: "There were two alternative before us—executive action by the President or amendment of the Constitution. These two positions were considered. It is true that Govinda Menon⁷ had suggested that executive action was not outside the framework of the Constitution and could be taken. But the general view of the Cabinet was that it should be done by an amendment of the Constitution. There was no question of the Home Ministry not agreeing to amend the Constitution for this purpose." When he was asked pointedly whether he was in favour of executive action in 1967, he said: "I was in favour of it. Instead of going to Parliament, why should we not do it by other methods which were open to us, which were equally constitutional? But I abided by the Cabinet decision. At that time some interested persons in the Congress

6. Article 21 of the Constitution of India makes privy purses charge on the consolidated fund of Indian Union and exempt from income-tax. Article 362 protects the rights, privileges, and dignities of the princes from statutory encroachment by Parliament or State legislatures.

7. The Law Minister.

8. October 29, 1967.

were misrepresenting my stand. I was branded as someone who had done all this to create trouble in the party because of my alleged feeling against the Indira Gandhi group. It was absolutely untrue. Some persons in the Congress twisted the whole thing to damn me. This game continues even now."

Towards the end of October 1967 the Prime Minister gave him her approval to start negotiations with the princes. According to "The Hindustan Times" three proposals were considered. One was to tax the privy purses at rates lower than those applicable to other unearned incomes, so that the Government could take away as tax a large chunk of the purses. The other was to bring about a gradual abolition of the purses within five to ten years, and the third was to issue Government bonds for a portion of the purses. In November 1967 Chavan held the first of a series of five meetings with representatives of the princes, who had in the meantime formed what was called the Concord of the Princely States. He told the three representatives of the Concord who met him at the first meeting that the Government was committed to abolish the privileges and privy purses, and that he was prepared to make transitional arrangements, because he recognized "the human aspect involved in implementing the mandate" of the Congress forthwith. He placed no concrete proposals at this session. The princes told the Home Minister that they would be prepared to make some sacrifice, but did not give any indication of its precise nature.

The Maharaja of Baroda, the chairman of the steering committee of the Concord, told newsmen who asked him for his reaction to Chavan's attitude: "How will you feel if there is a demand to remove your clothes?" Chavan's talks with the princes were marked by the same degree of bluntness as that of Sardar Patel who negotiated for the merger of the princely States with the Indian Union in 1948. When the Maharaja of Baroda was asked how he would compare the negotiations conducted by Sardar Patel and Chavan, he said: "The attitude was the same and with the history of that attitude we are not far away. In 1948 it was Sardar Patel who as Home Minister..."

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7. The Law Minister.

were misrepresenting my stand. I was branded as some one who had done all this to create trouble in the party because of my alleged feeling against the Indira Gandhi group. It was absolutely untrue. Some persons in the Congress twisted the whole thing to damn me. This game continues even now."

Towards the end of October 1967 the Prime Minister gave him her approval to start negotiations with the princes. According to 'The Hindustan Times' three proposals were considered. One was to tax the privy purses at rates lower than those applicable to other un-earned incomes, so that the Government could take away as tax a large chunk of the purses. The other was to bring about a gradual abolition of the purses within five to ten years, and the third was to issue government bonds for a portion of the purses. In November 1967 Chavan held the first of a series of five meetings with representatives of the princes, who had in the meantime formed what was called the Concord of the Princes. He told the three representatives of the Concord who met him at the first meeting that the Government was committed to abolish the privileges and privy purses, and that he was prepared to make transitional arrangements, because he recognized "the human aspect involved in implementing the mandate" of the Congress forthwith. He placed no concrete proposals at this session. The princes told the Home Minister that they would be prepared to make some sacrifice, but did not give any indication of its precise nature.

The Maharaja of Baroda, the chairman of the steering committee of the Concord, told newsmen who asked him for his reaction to Chavan's attitude: "How will you feel if there is a demand to remove your clothes?" Chavan's talks with the princes were marked by the same degree of bluntness as that of Sardar Patel who negotiated for the merger of the princely States with the Indian Union in 1948. When the Maharaja of Baroda was asked how he would compare the negotiations conducted by Patel and Chavan, he 'said': "The attitude was the same, and with the history of that attitude we are not very happy." In 1948 it was Sardar Patel who as Home Minister nego-

tiated with the princes the instrument of accession of their States with the Indian Union. When the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act in 1947, "the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian princely States lapsed with all its realities and agreements in force on that day." The governments of India and Pakistan did not inherit the rights and authority of the British government over the princely States but were free to enter into agreements with them. After Nehru and Sardar Patel had discussed with representatives of the princes the broad principles of the instrument of accession, Sardar Patel and his deputy, V. P. Menon, negotiated instruments of accession with individual princes. The none too pleasant memory of those negotiations was still fresh in the minds of many former maharajas.

Under the instrument of accession, the princes surrendered their rights, including the right to collect revenues. In return the Government agreed to pay them allowances and allowed them to enjoy certain privileges. Out of the 552 Indian princes who ruled over two-fifths of the total area of India at the time of independence, 284 princes were given privy purses while the rest were allowed to have zamindari rights. The total amount of privy purses paid in 1948 was about Rs. 5.70 crores. When the Congress decided to abolish the privy purses in 1967, the amount had come down to Rs. 4.82 crores a year, as the allowances were reduced after the death of the princes and with each succession. One hundred and seventy-nine former princes received less than Rs. 1 lakh a year as privy purse, while 77 got between Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 5 lakhs, 19 between Rs. 5 and Rs. 10 lakhs. Those who received more than Rs. 10 lakhs a year were the former rulers of Mysore (Rs. 26 lakhs), Hyderabad (Rs. 20 lakhs), Travancore (Rs. 18 lakhs), and Baroda (Rs. 14.5 lakhs). The 'rajah' of Katodia received the lowest privy purse, Rs. 192 a year.

The privileges given to the princes included free medical care for them and their family, provision of armed police guards and escorts, right to fly their own flags on their residences, cars and planes, exemption from the Indian Arms Act of 1878, exemption of the privy purses from income-tax, right to register motor cars without payment and use of red number plates on cars, exemp-

tion from customs duty of the baggages of former rulers of certain States, protection from prosecution in courts without the prior permission of the Government, military honours at funerals, free supply of water and electricity, public holidays in the former States on their birthdays. Some rulers enjoyed special privileges like that of Maharaja of Cochin who was to receive forty copies of the 'panchangam' (Hindu almanac) printed at the government press.

After these arrangements came into force and when the Constitution of India was being drafted, the Cabinet with Nehru in the chair took the decision that no constitutional guarantee about payment of the privy purses should be given to the princes. Sardar Patel was in Bombay when the Cabinet took the decision. When he returned to Delhi the next day, he put forward his views about the need to give constitutional guarantees. The Cabinet with Nehru in the chair went back on its stand and decided to incorporate in the Constitution guarantees about payment of privy purses.⁹ Sardar Patel made an eloquent speech in the Constituent Assembly, defending the privileges and privy purses as a "small price" paid for the "surrender" of two-fifths of India. He said: "Let us do justice to the princes. Let us place ourselves in their position and then assess the value of their sacrifice. The rulers have now discharged their part of the obligations by transferring all ruling powers and by agreeing to the integration of their States. The main part of our obligation, under these circumstances, is to ensure that the guarantees given by us in respect of the privy purses are fully implemented. Our failure to do so would be a breach of faith and seriously prejudice the stabilization of the new order."

Two decades later another Home Minister told the princes that after the privy purses had been agreed upon, many changes had taken place, many hereditary rights and unearned incomes had disappeared. At the second meeting between Chavan and the representatives of the Concord on December 26, 1967, he told the ten princes who met him that privy purses and privileges without any related functions and responsibilities could

not be continued. On behalf of the princes, the Maharaja of Baroda contended that all the factors that existed eighteen years ago were present in 1967 also and wanted to know what had prompted the Government to decide on abolishing the purses and privileges. One of the rulers said he could have understood the logic behind the step if a communist government had taken it. Chavan told them that the meaning of socialism was not the same for all, but that socialism was not involved in the issue at all. What was involved was the principle that unearned incomes and hereditary privileges were inconsistent with democracy.

At the third meeting on May 29, 1968, twelve princes were present. The Maharaja of Baroda informed the Home Minister that the princes were not reconciled to the abolition of privy purses and privileges. The ruler of Dhrangadhra read out a long statement which said that while the princes were prepared for reasonable adjustments, they would not give up their self-respect. He quoted Morarji Desai, the deputy Prime Minister's opinion that the obligations of the Government towards the princes would be kept. Chavan told the princes that there was nothing personal or subjective in the Government's decision, nothing that should hurt their self-respect, and that the decision was the result of the process of historical changes. He tried to persuade them to accept the principle of the abolition of the privileges and privy purses so that consequential steps could be taken and informed them he could not wait long before the next step was taken.

Summing up the steps he took, Chavan 'said': "On many occasions I prepared statements and notes for the Cabinet for its consideration. These went to the Cabinet more than ten times. But the proposals were not finalized, and every time it was decided to reconsider the issue. Finally we had a brief prepared by the Cabinet and we worked within the framework of this brief." The negotiations went through many phases, but did not make any progress, because the princes never wanted them to progress.

Asked how Morarji Desai came to be involved in the negotiations, Chavan 'said' that after meeting the princes three times without any positive results, he felt there

11. The writer learns from a source which would like to remain anonymous that Dr. Nagendra Singh, the President's Privy Secretary, was negotiating with the princes on behalf of the Privy Minister and that a settlement on the basis of the princes surrendering 50 per cent of the purses was about to be made.

10. Referring to Moraji Desai's observation in the Lok Sabha on September 2, 1970, Chavan said to the writer on September 1970: "Moraji Desai was totally wrong when he said in Parliament last week that he was about to clinch the issue when he left the Cabinet."

was need for fresh thinking on the subject. He told a informal meeting of the Cabinet that he thought the princes were not interested in the negotiations. "I came to this assessment in 1968. Meanwhile some of my critics in the Cabinet started a whispering campaign that I was 'persona non grata' with the princes. They said the princes would not listen to me. I told the Cabinet that I did not want to project my own personality and that I was only interested in the cause. I said that the cause could be advanced by someone else conducting the negotiations, I would be happy. I further said that the only person who could take over the negotiations was the Prime Minister or possibly the deputy Prime Minister. I said if Moraji Desai wanted to talk to the princes, he could do so. The Prime Minister asked him in my presence whether he would do it. Moraji Desai was willing. He carried on the discussions but I could not succeed."¹⁰

The Government drafted a bill seeking to amend the Constitution for the abolition of the privileges and purses. The Prime Minister was not sure even at that stage whether the bill should be introduced in the budget session and suggested to Chavan a few minutes before he was due to introduce it in the Lok Sabha that it may be postponed, pending further discussion with the princes.¹¹ He felt that it was too late at that time to hold back. The bill was introduced by him in the Lok Sabha on May 18, 1970. The three-clause bill said in its statement of objects and reasons: "The concept of rulership with privy purses and special privileges unrelated to any current functions and social purposes is incompatible with an egalitarian social order. The Government have, therefore, decided to terminate the privy

purses and privileges of rulers of former Indian States. Hence the Bill." The bill said: "Be it enacted by Parliament in the twenty-first year of the Republic of India as follows: (1) This Act may be called the Constitution (Twenty-fourth amendment) Act 1970. (2) Article 291 and 362 of the Constitution shall be omitted. (3) In article 366 of the Constitution, clause (22) shall be omitted."

Even while the Home Minister was holding talks with the princes, the Prime Minister was also meeting them in the hope she would be able to persuade them to agree to some sort of an arrangement. But she soon realized that it was futile to carry on discussions with them. Chavan 'said': "She had a hope, a faint hope that she would be able to persuade them to some sort of a settlement and many middlemen were working for this. But I knew that my assessment that the princes were not interested in negotiations would prove right. As the Prime Minister, she had to weigh the pros and cons of the issue.. She had a wider view than I had. She had more information with her, more contacts, possibly better contacts. She was in a position to find out the truth about the whole situation and sift it from the untruth. I felt as the Prime Minister, she had the right to do so. But when she realized that the princes did not mean business, she did not hesitate a moment to go ahead with the bill, and I should say this to her credit that she took a correct position."

The bill came up for discussion in the Lok Sabha in the last week of the monsoon session of Parliament in September 1970. Chavan had by then become Finance Minister and the bill was piloted by the Prime Minister who had taken charge of the Home portfolio. She described the bill "as an important step in the further democratization of our society" and assured the princes that there was no animus against individual princes. She requested them to co-operate with the Government "in doing away with certain institutions which are not in harmony with a society striving for equality and social justice." She warned that "either we bring about change peacefully and with consent, or the change will come in a manner which I am sure this Parliament and this country would not like."

Chavan was reluctant to take part in the debate. He had not been in touch with the negotiations the Prime Minister had conducted with the princes after he left Home. But at the request of the Prime Minister, K. Raghuramiah, the Chief Whip of the Congress party in Parliament, persuaded Chavan at the last moment to speak on the bill. When he rose to speak, N. G. Ranga, the leader of the Swatantra Party in the Lok Sabha, interjected: "You are no longer Home Minister. Why do you bother?" Chavan did not take notice of the intervention and said that as "one who had dealt with this problem from 1967 onwards, I thought it was necessary for me to intervene in the debate and give the historical background of this problem as it started taking shape in 1967 and onwards." He said that the purpose of the talks with the princes was to decide about the transitional allowances the Government wanted to give them. He referred to the five meetings he had with the princes, to the talks carried on by Morarji Desai and the Prime Minister with some of the princes, and to his assessment that the princes never wanted to negotiate with the Government. He argued that the agreements made by the Government with the princes were not contractual but political and said that the rights under the agreements were "inherently temporary rights, and therefore, the Constitution had made the provision..to keep these temporary agreements non-justiciable." Referring to the criticism that the Government was undoing the work of Sardar Patel, he said that what Patel did then was a 'takaza' (compulsion) of history, and what the present Government wanted to do was again a 'takaza' of history. "Those who make history except their disciples and followers to improve on what they did and if necessary unmake it." Amid constant interruptions he said that the abolition of the privileges and privy purses was a compulsion of history and added: "I am trying to bring before you this 'takaza' of history. When I said that history had ordained it, I meant that it was a compulsion... of the times. If they (opposition parties) want to ignore the writing on the wall and would prefer to be swept away and thrown into the backwaters of history, I can only say 'amen'."

The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on September 2, 1970, with 339 voting for and 154 against. On September 4, it was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by the Prime Minister. The discussion on it followed the same pattern as in the Lok Sabha. While members of the old Congress spoke of their commitment to the basic objective of the abolition of the privy purses, they maintained their inability to support the bill for the manner in which the Prime Minister had handled it. The Swatantra and Jan Sangh members denounced it, because they thought they saw in it the betrayal of the pledged word of the Government. The Prime Minister said her task had been lightened by the fact that the Rajya Sabha had earlier adopted a resolution with "near unanimity", asking the Government to bring in legislation for the abolition of the privileges and privy purses. He said the present bill provided the Rajya Sabha the opportunity to reaffirm its earlier resolution. Echoing Chavan's oft-repeated exhortation to the princes to change with the times, Indira Gandhi said: "I think it is the nation's will, it is the nation's desire...and we must change with the times."

The Rajya Sabha voted on the bill on September 5. The bill required two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. When the voting took place, it was found that 149 voted for the bill and 75 against it. The support for the bill fell short of the two-thirds majority by one-third of a vote. The bill was defeated by only a fraction of a vote. Soon after the defeat of the bill, the Cabinet held an emergency meeting, and after a 75-minute discussion decided to derecognize the princes by an executive order. On September 6, the President issued an order under article 366 (22) of the Constitution, derecognizing the princes with immediate effect.

Chavan 'said':¹² "When we first took the decision to make an amendment to the Constitution, the split in the Congress had not taken place and we had a safe majority in Parliament. At that time there was no doubt in our minds of getting the required two-thirds majority for the measure. It never entered our imagination that the

12. In interview on September 8, 1970.

split would take place and we would be faced with a different kind of situation." Referring to the defeat of the bill in the Rajya Sabha, he said: "It is true the measure failed to get two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha as required by the Constitution. The Government took the decision to issue the executive order, because it was the only logical step open to it. The issue was tied up with many major matters which were of importance to the future of India. In the voting in the Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha, there was polarization in action. All the vested interests and reactionary parties were on one side and all the progressive parties on the other. If the Government had not brought in executive action, the right reactionaries in the country would have had the satisfaction of having thrown overboard a progressive measure. They would have had a feeling of triumph. A process of demoralization would have set in in the ruling party and in the Government. The only possible way out for us was to bring in the executive order."

The propriety of the Government issuing the executive order became a subject of debate all over India. Meanwhile, five princes filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court on September 11, challenging the presidential order. A specially constituted bench of eleven judges of the Supreme Court, after hearing the arguments on behalf of the princes and the Government, on December 15 (curiously enough the twentieth death anniversary of Sardar Patel) struck down by a majority of 9 to 2 the President's order as being 'ultra vires', illegal and on that account inoperative. The princes again became entitled to all their privileges and privy purses. Justice Shah who delivered the majority judgment held that the President was not invested with any political power transcending the Constitution which he could exercise to the prejudice of a citizen, that the powers of the President arose from and were defined by the Constitution, and that the validity of the exercise of those powers was always amenable to the jurisdiction of courts, unless the jurisdiction was by precise enactment excluded. The Chief Justice, Mr. Hidayatullah, in a separate judgment, agreed with the majority view and went a step further. He said that however

wide the power of the President be, it did not extend to "withdrawing recognition of all rulers by a midnight order,"¹³ and added that "neither the paramountcy of the Grand Moghul who could give subedarships to his generals as he pleased nor the paramountcy of the British Crown has descended on" the President. Summing up the verdict of the Supreme Court, "The Times of India"¹⁴ said "The President proposes, the Supreme Court disposes. This is how the drama centering on the privy purses of the princes has ended for the moment."

The Supreme Court judgment put the Government in an awkward spot. The Government's commitment to its policy of abolishing the privy purses and privileges was reiterated by the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha a few hours after the Supreme Court had struck down the Presidential order. She said: "I have noted the views of hon. Members—all of them, including the one that elections,¹⁵ should be held immediately, and the other that we should re-introduce the bill. I can only assure the House that the Government is committed to its policy of abolishing the privy purses by appropriate constitutional means." The Supreme Court verdict came as a stunning blow to the Government. Chavan, who had championed the cause of abolishing the privy purses more vehemently and consistently than any other Cabinet member, felt that the game was lost, at least for the moment. He, however, had no doubt that the measure had the approval of the nation and that the verdict of the Supreme Court was not the last word on the issue.

His years in the Home ministry were rewarding not merely because of the vast power he wielded but also because of the satisfaction he derived in using it to work for progressive social and economic goals. Even in the midst of keeping law and order, his eyes were set on far off horizons, on the objective of creating a socialist, secular state in India. He held the Home portfolio for three years and eight months during a

13. This was a reference to the President signing the executive order late at night.

14. December 16, 1970.

15. See Chapter XII.

troubled decade, a decade full of new ordeals, new challenges, and threats which no Home Minister before him had to face. He was able to absorb all the shocks and jolts the Government was subjected to by political, social, and economic conflicts. He not only survived these and other pressures but also helped the democratic Constitution of India to survive.

9

The Genesis of the Split

Since 1958 Chavan has been a member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the highest policy-making body of the ruling party in India, and since 1962, member of the Union Cabinet. As Defence Minister he kept himself away from factional politics in Delhi when he moved to Home he was thrown into the vortex of political controversies. For well over a decade he has had an important role not only in the formulation of Congress policies but also in the conflicts inside the party. He 'said' one of the major areas of conflict was in the relationship between Congress president and Home Minister, between the organizational wing and the parliamentary wing of the party. In fact, the lack of harmony between the two was one of the two main causes of the split in the Congress in 1969. The other was the ideological cleavage that developed between the radical and the conservative groups in the party. Before examining Chavan's role in the events leading to the split, a review of the origin and growth of the conflict between the parliamentary and organizational wings is essential. The conflict is as old as the first Congress government. It arose almost immediately after Nehru formed the first national government in 1946 under the British, long before Chavan came on the national scene. When India became free

in 1947, Nehru was the Congress president. He resigned his office before becoming Prime Minister, establishing the convention of party leaders resigning their posts before taking up government offices. Acharya Kripalani succeeded him as Congress president. Sharp differences arose between the two, signifying the conflict between the two power centres in the Congress. Kripalani resigned in protest against the Prime Minister's interference in organizational matters.

After Purushottamdas Tandon was elected Congress president in 1951, the two power centres in the Congress clashed with each other again. The right wing in the party led by Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel supported Tandon. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Ajit Prasad Jain, two of Nehru's close Cabinet colleagues, resigned from the Congress in protest against Tandon's policies and asked Nehru to accept their resignation from the Cabinet. Nehru held that a minister need not be a Congress member and asked his colleagues to continue in the Cabinet. Tandon considered Nehru's view as a violation of party discipline and told him that he held the office of Prime Minister at the pleasure of the Congress. He said: "The Prime Minister and his Cabinet are responsible to the Congress and have to carry out policies laid down by the Congress from time to time." In a dramatic move Nehru resigned from the CWC and the Central Election Committee of the Congress. Meanwhile, 234 out of the 279 members of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) reiterated their confidence in his leadership.² Tandon resigned. Nehru took over as Congress president and emerged as the undisputed leader of the party and the government.

When both the offices were combined in him, there was concentration of power and consequent reduction of the area of conflict inside the Congress. After Nehru became the supreme arbiter of the party and the government.

1. An echo of Tandon's words was heard in the Congress 1969 when S. Nijalingappa, the Congress President, resigned from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's implicit obedience.

2. A repetition of the event was witnessed 18 years after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sought and received the confidence on November 13, 1969.

ment, indeed of all national affairs in India, he could safely hand over the party affairs to Congress presidents selected with his approval. But in his last days when his hold on the party and the government declined, the office of Congress president again assumed importance.

In the twilight years of Nehru's life, Congress leaders were concerned not only about his failing health but also about the declining prestige of the Congress. Chavan 'said' they were upset about the reverses in May 1963 in the three prestigious by-elections to the Lok Sabha from Amroha, Rajkot, and Farukhabad constituencies. The three successful candidates, Acharya Kripalani, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, and M.R. Masani, were consistent critics of the Nehru government. The reverses sent a wave of despondency through the party and baffled the leaders. 'The Times of India' said that "the Congress High Command had reduced itself to a laughing stock...a group of frightened politicians unable to or unwilling to come to grips with problems or policies..." The CWC felt that urgent action had to be taken to rehabilitate the Congress in the minds of the people. Pressure was also building up from below. On a petition by 80 members of the AICC, the CWC called a special session of the AICC on August 9 and 10 to discuss the election reverses. This was the first time a meeting of the AICC was held on the basis of a requisition by its members.³

On the eve of the AICC meeting in August 1963, K. Kamaraj, the Chief Minister of Madras and member of the CWC, placed before the committee a bold and novel proposal that "leading Congressmen who are in government should voluntarily relinquish their ministerial posts and offer themselves for full-time organizational work." The proposal, later known as the 'Kamaraj plan', was conceived in a different form by Biju Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Orissa. He discussed the idea with Kamaraj and later with Nehru in June 1963. Kamaraj, who saw a great deal of merit in Biju Patnaik's proposal, discussed

3. The second requisitioned meeting was held on August 25, 1969 when a majority of the members of the AICC defied the CWC and dismissed S. Nijalingappa from the Congress presidency.

it with Prime Minister Nehru in Hyderabad early in August. Nehru later confirmed that Kamaraj "had consulted me and I had asked him to draw up a plan and put it before the AICC. It was good luck that the AICC accepted the plan with great acclamation."⁴

Kamaraj himself never said who was the author of the plan. In a message to the Madhya Pradesh Congress 'Patrika' in August 1964, he said that the plan was not conceived by him but by the Congress leadership, especially "our great leader, Mr. Nehru." Whoever was its author, the plan came to be known after Kamaraj, and it was endorsed by the CWC and the AICC in August 1963. Nehru had all along been irked by the postures adopted by Morarji Desai and S. K. Patil, and the plan helped him to drop them from the Cabinet and make it more homogeneous. Kamaraj was also in favour of displacing Morarji Desai. Under the plan, a few weeks later six Central ministers, including Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, and S. K. Patil, resigned. Six Chief Ministers of States—Kamaraj of Madras, Biju Patnaik of Orissa, Bakshi Ghulam Moham-med of Jammu and Kashmir, and three others—also relinquished office. Chavan was requested by Prime Minister Nehru to stay on in the Government and look after the Defence portfolio.

The Kamaraj plan was a purge 'per se', but it gave the Congress a temporary face-lift. Nevertheless, opposition leaders in Parliament took advantage of the weakness of the ruling party, and for the first time in sixteen years brought a no-confidence motion against the Nehru government on August 16, 1963. It was defeated, but it showed that the Congress was no longer monolithic and Nehru no more the supreme arbiter of national affairs. The fissures inside the Congress soon became evident. S. K. Patil, one of the ministers eased out of office, was the first to object to the Kamaraj plan. Morarji Desai also was deeply upset and said later that the plan seemed to him "to have been motivated not only to get rid of me but also to pave the way for Indira Gandhi to become the Prime Minister."⁵ The

Kamaraj plan raised the prestige of the Congress president and gave the organizational wing of the party a sudden importance. Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had both resigned from the Cabinet under the Kamaraj plan, immediately became the two potential candidates for the office of Congress president.

Some Congress leaders were suspicious of Morarji Desai's rigid, puritan and orthodox attitudes. Five of them—Kamaraj, S. Nijalingappa, the Chief Minister of Mysore, N. Sanjiva Reddi, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Atulya Ghosh of West Bengal, and Srinivasa Malliah of Mysore—met in October 1963 at Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh to decide about the next Congress president. These party bosses had the support of S. K. Patil, who kept himself in close touch with them on the telephone, although he did not attend the Tirupathi conclave. It was at this meeting that an informal group-leadership, later known as 'the syndicate' was born.⁶ The five leaders decided at Tirupathi to make Lal Bahadur Shastri the next Congress president and if for any reason Shastri was not available, to elect Kamaraj.⁷ Chavan 'said': "It is true that they arrived at some sort of a consensus about the succession to the Prime Minister also. But this was not made public at that time because they thought it would offend Nehru." The syndicate members later admitted that their main purpose was to select a successor to Nehru.⁸ Their objec-

6. The term 'syndicate' was first used by Inder Malhotra in *The Statesman* of June 16, 1964.

7. Morarji Desai deposed on July 7, 1970 in the Congress Election Symbol Case before the Chief Election Commissioner in New Delhi that the term 'syndicate' was first used in 1964 to refer to a group of top leaders in the Congress party. He said Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddi, Atulya Ghosh, Nijalingappa, and S.K. Patil were the members of the syndicate and believed that Lal Bahadur Shastri was the inspirer of it. Morarji, however, said he was not a member of the syndicate and added: "How could I be in it? The syndicate was against me." He said the syndicate was against his being elected leader of the party in Parliament and it was again the syndicate which "planted" Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister. (*Hindustan Times*, June 8, 1970).

8. In his introduction to *The Split* by Atulya Ghosh, Nijalingappa says: "We decided at that time that Shri Kamaraj should be the next Congress president.... At that time, and in

ative was to block Morarji Desai from becoming Congress President and to isolate him, so that he would have no chance of becoming Prime Minister. They supported Shastri in the hope that he would give the Congress a stable leadership and cause no division in the party ranks. But Shastri declined the offer because he wanted to avoid an open clash with Morarji Desai. Kamraj was elected Congress president on November 20, 1963 with the solid backing of the syndicate and the blessings of Nehru.⁹ The Jaipur session of the AICC which met a few weeks earlier had passed a seemingly innocuous resolution asking the Prime Minister and the Congress president to hold periodic consultations. The resolution signified a new pattern of distribution of power and recognition of Nehru's position as the supreme leader of the Congress.

President Radhakrishnan was concerned about the lack of direction in the Government. He felt he could play a useful and independent role in national politics. Before the Kamraj plan was placed before the Government, Kamraj had discussed it with Radhakrishnan as President. The President hoped that Nehru would learn from the Government under the Kamraj plan and that he would be able to exercise his special responsibilities as President. He had cut short his stay in London and returned to Delhi in early August 1952. He waited anxiously for the outcome of the Kamraj plan. Although Nehru had to resign, he was not allowed to do so in the interim. Chester Bowles, the U. S. ambassador in India, in his memoirs: "In the last five months of his term as President Radhakrishnan had become increasingly

that meeting we considered it desirable to have the Prime Minister, getting old, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, Prime Minister."

[illegible]

cerned about Nehru's ability to manage the affairs of government. On several occasions he expressed to me in a half-joking manner the wish that somehow after Nehru's death or retirement the whole country could operate under 'President's rule' for a few months. This, he said, would enable him in his role as President to ease some of the accumulating political conflicts and to make some of the difficult but necessary decisions before turning the government over to a new Prime Minister and Cabinet."¹⁰

Less than two months after the plenary session of the Congress at Bhubaneswar, Nehru suffered a stroke affecting his left side. During his illness, Home Minister Nanda and Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari held joint control over the official business normally handled by the Prime Minister. The Emergency Committee of the Cabinet of which Chavan was a member met frequently with Nanda in the chair. During this period Chavan played an important role in the Cabinet. Kamaraj was frequently consulted and informed of major government policies, most of which were in a flux. Inder Malhotra said that people were "appalled by the crippling malaise of inaction and inertia which had overtaken the Government and the leadership."¹¹

Prime Minister Nehru died of heart attack on May 27, 1964. Congress leaders from all over India converged on New Delhi, and within an hour of his death talks of succession began. A watchful world had doubted whether any smooth succession to Nehru would be possible, but the syndicate headed by Kamaraj had the answers to almost all the vexed questions of succession. Morarji Desai, who still commanded considerable respect inside the Congress, was one of the contenders to the throne. When the CWC met to discuss the issue of succession, Kamaraj was authorised to consult Congress leaders and ascertain the consensus among them. He conducted the battle of succession with the thoroughness of an experienced general on the battle front and used his special weapons of silence and 'parkalam' (we'll see) with devastating effect. Kamaraj had already made up his mind on

10. Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep*, p. 496.

11. *The Statesman*, January 31, 1964.

to support Morarji Desai. His instruction to his closest associates was to do everything possible to get Shastri or Jagjivan Ram elected as the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party. Perhaps one of the most important preliminary contacts Kamaraj made in his effort to reach a "consensus" was with Chavan. When Kamaraj's emissaries asked Chavan what should be done and whom he supported, he replied: "The world expects you to behave with dignity.... We must do everything possible to achieve unanimity." Chavan did not commit himself, but said he wanted the election to be unanimous. He was, however, in favour of Shastri and wanted Kamaraj to call a meeting of the CWC and the Chief Ministers before arriving at a consensus. The Congress president followed Chavan's advice to the last word. Morarji Desai also sought Chavan's support but was put off. Chavan knew that the syndicate was powerful at that moment and that it would be difficult for him to work against its wishes. Further, he was not in favour of Morarji Desai, with whose puritan attitudes he disagreed. He was convinced that Shastri would be a better person than Desai to become Prime Minister.

The leftist group inside the Congress, led by K. D. Malaviya, oddly enough first supported Morarji Desai, a vehement opponent of leftist ideologies. Later the group gave its support to Indira Gandhi, who was emotionally unprepared for a contest but was nonetheless prepared to become Prime Minister. The syndicate was not in her favour, nor in favour of Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda, a willing candidate without much support. Morarji Desai had the support of Biju Patnaik of Orissa, D. Sanjivayya, a former Congress President, Mohanlal Sukhadia, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, and Jagjivan Ram who was himself a candidate but gave up the race in midstream. Kamaraj, the efficient manager of the syndicate, cleverly managed the succession drama and played the game of consensus so convincingly that Morarji Desai withdrew from the contest and offered to propose Shastri's name in the CPP meeting. But even this honour was denied to Desai, because acting Prime Minister Nanda insisted that he should have the privilege of proposing Shastri's name.

On June 2, 1964 at a solemn and dignified meeting

of the CPP presided over by Kamaraj, Lal Bahadur Shastri was elected leader of the CPP. His election was acclaimed by the press in India and abroad as a great success for democracy in India. 'The Times of India' observed that the Congress had demonstrated "unity of purpose which will stand it in good stead in the years to come." 'The Hindu' of Madras wrote that "on the choice...there can be no two opinions...(Shastri) is eminently fitted to promote this collective leadership." The succession drama was well-managed by the syndicate, but it raised the principle of consensus to the pinnacle of all political virtues. Shastri remarked later that "even if these gentlemen (members of the syndicate) had done nothing, a large majority, at least 80 per cent, of the Congress Parliamentary Party, would have voted for me. I knew that."

What the syndicate did was to smother jarring notes inside the Congress, prevent unseemly competition, and pave the way for an orderly and smooth election. But the new process of decision-making, enthusiastically welcomed by those who wanted to avoid a crisis in the top leadership of the party, amounted to a negation of free and frank discussion. The much-maligned Morarji Desai later cautioned the Congress of the dangers of reaching decisions by the method of consensus and of creating "unhealthy precedents...in the effort to claim unanimous support for the choice of a few people who are in positions of authority." The method of consensus gave a handful of leaders at the top the feeling that they were charged with the exclusive responsibility of making decisions on behalf of the party and the Government. However well-intentioned the leaders were, their action gave rise to a very dangerous precedent.

The new Prime Minister, Shastri and the Congress president, Kamaraj were able to arrive at a working arrangement between them, in spite of their disagreements on many matters. In fact, unlike previous Congress presidents, Kamaraj took the liberty of speaking with authority on domestic and even foreign affairs. Shastri did not shun the syndicate, nor did he woo it. His efforts to meet the threat of famine and his stand against the Pakistani aggression in 1965 made him a great leader in his own right, and he kept the syndicate

The syndicate had by then lost some of its cohesion
Indira Gandhi would be the future Prime Minister.

Ministers, and the members of the CWC. He knew that
bers, he sensed the mood of the CFP, the Congress Chief
that in spite of the opposition of some syndicate mem-
port her. It should be said to the credit of Kamara
dicate, particularly Atulya Ghosh, were reluctant to sup-
sulting each other all along. Some members of the syn-
port and told the press that she and he had been con-
favour. Indira Gandhi confirmed that she had his sup-
It was Chavan's support that tilted the scales in her
pledge to Chavan.

She was discreetly silent and did not make a similar
draw from the contest and his votes would go to her.
and had the backing of other leaders, he would with-
Chavan told her that if she wanted to be Prime Minister
close allies at that time, came to an understanding.
support for him. Meanwhile, Indira Gandhi and Chavan,
a good Prime Minister and made cautious moves to win
ter Naik of Maharashtra thought that Chavan would be
not amenable to the control of the CWC. Chief Minis-
ruled out Chavan who, he considered, was a strong man,
taneous as it was to Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1964. He
But his support to her was not as enthusiastic and spon-
was not likely to be rigid and could be removed easily.
ciates that he would support Indira Gandhi because she
Madras to discuss the succession issue. He told his asso-
Shastri, he called a meeting of his close associates in
Kamara, the Congress president, heard of the death of
Minister, and Chavan, the Defence Minister. As soon as
were Indira Gandhi, the Information and Broadcasting
that he "would be a candidate." Two other candidates
died. He did not want to miss it again. He announced
sed the chance of becoming Prime Minister when Nehru
for the office of Prime Minister. Morarji Desai had mis-
Prime Minister, considered himself as the obvious choice
Home Minister Nanda, who was sworn in as acting
of Shastri.

with Shastri in Tashkent and flew back with the body
signing the peace treaty with Pakistan. Chavan was
in Tashkent on January 11, 1966, a few hours after
teen months after he became Prime Minister, he died
at arms length. But his triumph was short lived. Nine-

and strength, but it still believed in the principle of consensus. The Congress Chief Ministers played a major role in the battle of succession, and decided at an informal meeting to support Indira Gandhi. In the open contest between her and Morarji Desai, the former was elected by a large majority. Kamaraj did not have time to help the leaders to arrive at a consensus, because support for Indira Gandhi was very strong. It would not have been possible for the syndicate to block her election, even if it had wanted to.

Soon after she became Prime Minister, she gave proof of her independence. Her selection of some ministers in her Cabinet upset Kamaraj. He feared that a young and influential group of leaders on whom he had no control had emerged in the Congress. The group consisted of Y. B. Chavan, C. Subramaniam, and Asoka Mehta. Kamaraj wanted to block Chavan's appointment as Home Minister, but was unable to do so. The conflict between Congress president and Prime Minister that had plagued the Congress again and again since 1947 reappeared with redoubled vigour. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to devalue the Indian rupee in 1966, a serious clash occurred between her and Kamaraj. In the selection of candidates for the 1967 general elections also differences between the two cropped up.

After the general elections in 1967, the syndicate's influence declined. The three stalwarts of the syndicate, Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, and S. K. Patil, were defeated in the elections. The syndicate soon became a discredited group, and as a consequence Prime Minister Indira Gandhi enjoyed greater manoeuvrability inside the party and the Government. "Her new Cabinet was able to meet the pressing threats to stability with courage and... in co-operation with the new Home Minister Y. B. Chavan, the Prime Minister was able to bring a satisfactory conclusion to the political fast over cow slaughter and the Punjab border demarcation."¹²

With the decline of the power of the syndicate, the office of Congress president lost its prestige. But Kamaraj was reluctant to recognize the change in the power structure inside the Congress. In 1967 he wanted to be

12. Stanley Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India*, p. 102.

13. *The Statesman*, September 17, 1969.
14. Foreword to *The Split* by Atulya Ghosh.
15. See chapters X and XI for a detailed account of the events before and after the AICC session in Bangalore.

The crisis in the Congress soon deepened. After the Bangalore session of the AICC¹⁵ in July 1969, the differences between the two groups came into sharp focus and in November the Congress split into two. Nijalingappa and the syndicate headed the minority group in the AICC, while Indira Gandhi commanded majority support both in the AICC and in the CPM. After the split, Indira Gandhi toyed with the idea of becoming the Congress president. When the selection of the Congress president was discussed at a high-level meeting, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed suggested that she should become the Congress president. Jagjivan Ram supported the suggestion. Indira Gandhi did not express any opinion. She asked Chavan what he thought of it. His view was that it would be better not to combine the two offices in the same person. Jagjivan Ram was persuaded to accept the office. He became the president of the new Congress

ambition to become a dictator of this country.”¹⁴

“more concerned about herself, her authority and her CWC. He complained that the Prime Minister was Minister and her Cabinet were answerable to the Congress was different. He thought that the Prime Minister (party).”¹³ Nijalingappa’s assessment of the role of the need for a conflict between the two (government and youth wing, a women’s wing and so on. There is no as Gandhi envisaged—to have a constructive wing, a with the people but to undertake various programmes organization to exist as it is, not only to keep in touch room in the conditions in which we are in India, for the out when she said in Calcutta: “I think there is great Her assessment of the role of the Congress was split

ed S. Nijalingappa as a compromise candidate and persuaded him to become the Congress president. He was ing between her and the new president.

term. But Indira Gandhi was against it. She supported elected Congress president for the third consecutive

party,¹⁶ as distinct from the old Congress led by Nijalingappa, on the understanding that she would allow him to continue in the Cabinet. With the election of Jagjivan Ram, the two power centres inside the Congress more or less coalesced and lost their separate identity and thrust. For all practical purposes Indira Gandhi became the supreme boss of the Congress and the CWC a rubber-stamp council, despite the inclusion of leftist elements in it. As long as the Congress president was only a member of the Cabinet under the Prime Minister, his party office became a glorified administrative office, functioning for and on behalf of the Prime Minister.

In June 1970 differences arose between the Congress president and the Prime Minister. Indira Gandhi wanted Jagjivan Ram to resign his presidentship of the Congress so that she could herself take over the office or hand it over to someone else. Jagjivan Ram was reluctant to vacate the office and said he saw no reason why he should resign. He tried to get Chavan to support his stand, but Chavan edged away from him. The Prime Minister became wary of the Congress president's moves, particularly his meeting in August 1970 with Kamaraj, the leader of Congress (O).

During the general elections in 1971, Jagjivan Ram's role in organizing the Congress election campaign was minimal, because Indira Gandhi took complete control of the campaign and put the AICC office in charge of her able and trusted colleague, Uma Shankar Dikshit. It was natural for her to do so, for the stakes were very high for her, much higher than for Jagjivan Ram. The opposition between the Congress president and the Prime Minister sharpened over their differences in the adjustment of seats with the CPI in Bihar and elsewhere. He said that "the Prime Minister was talking through somebody with the communists." He added: "The Congress without its president has no authority to agree to any such arrangement.... I am not a sleeping president."¹⁷

16. Throughout this book the new Congress Party is referred to as the Congress or the new Congress, and the old Congress Party as Congress (O) or old Congress.

17. *The Times of India*, March 4, 1971.

After the general elections in 1971, Indira Gandhi asked Jagjivan Ram to step down from the office of Congress president, if he wished to continue as Cabinet minister. He gave up his party office and even wanted to resign from the Cabinet. D. Sanjivayya, an ardent follower of the Prime Minister, became Congress president. After she became the supreme arbiter of the party and the Government as a consequence of her massive victory at the polls, she could safely hand over the party affairs to some one who owed allegiance to her. There is no guarantee, however, that the deep-rooted malaise in the party has disappeared. All Congress presidents have subscribed to the view held by Purushottamdas Tandon in 1951 that "the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are responsible to the Congress and have to carry out policies laid down by the Congress from time to time." An echo of Tandon's opinion was heard in D. Sanjivayya's statement made in Hyderabad on April 23, 1971 (as reported by the UNI) that the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers should be accountable to the CWC with regard to the implementation of its resolutions and should periodically report to the CWC on the progress of the implementation of the various resolutions passed by the Congress.¹⁸

The struggle for supremacy between Congress president and Prime Minister, the origin and growth of which have been traced above, was only one of the two main causes that led to the split in the Congress. The other and no less important cause was the emergence of ideological differences. The genesis of these differences, according to Chavan, "goes beyond what happened in Bangalore in July 1969, far beyond that. I would say the genesis goes back to 1962-63. At that time the Congress leaders were taking stock of the economic and political policies of the Congress."

Nehru, worried over the existence of ideological tensions within the party, took a close second look at its policies and programmes. His anxiety about the future of the Congress was reflected in the discussions with his colleagues and the hints he gave them in the meeting of the CWC. He wanted to give a new orientation

national policies, particularly in the economic sphere. He was also in search of a new organizational structure for the Congress, a structure that would give opportunities to younger leaders to assume greater responsibilities. He had, therefore, earlier accepted the Kamaraj plan.¹⁹ He asked PCCs to suggest new ideas that would revitalise the Congress.

Chavan 'said': "When we sat together to prepare our programme for the Bhubaneshwar session of the Congress in 1964, the opinions of the different PCCs were taken into consideration. After Avadi,²⁰ Bhubaneshwar marked a new phase in the history of the Congress. Even though we had accepted the socialist pattern of society as our objective at Avadi, no serious change took place and a feeling of uneasiness grew within the Congress." At the Nagpur session in 1959 another attempt was made by the Congress to re-define its goal and make its policies more progressive. The Congress passed a resolution on co-operative farming and service co-operatives. "The service co-operatives made some progress", 'said' Chavan, "but co-operative farming did not click."

The uneasiness in the rank and file increased and there was a sense of despair among them. Nehru was deeply disturbed by the Congress reverses in the by-elections in early 1963 and by the lack of perspective among Congress leaders. Chavan 'said': "We shared his anguish about the state of affairs inside the Congress. As far as the organization and the policies were concerned, we went according to his wishes.... It was with this background of uneasiness and despair that we met at Bhubaneshwar. The re-appraisal of the policies by the CWC under Nehru's guidance was reflected in the resolutions passed at the Bhubaneshwar session. There we gave some content to the idea of socialism, and more than that, a sense of commitment." The resolution passed at the Bhubaneshwar session said that by 1975 the Congress should meet the five basic needs of the

19. See chapter X.

20. At the Avadi session of the Congress in 1955, the Congress accepted the objective of establishing a socialist pattern of society in India.

people for food, clothing, medicine, shelter, and education.

"Nehru's death soon after Bhubaneswar", said Chavan, "was a great loss, not in the formal sense that a great prime minister had died. It was a time when basic changes were taking place in the Congress Party, a time when an effective lead was necessary. The spirit with which the Bhubaneswar resolution was accepted could not be pursued, and his death created different political problems, including the problem of succession." When Lal Bahadur Shastri became Prime Minister in 1964, he had a different set of problems to face. He took some time to consolidate the administration. In 1964 he spent most of his time in strengthening his own position, improving the administrative machinery, and acquainting himself with the problems India faced. Then came the conflict with Pakistan. The great calamity of famine in half a dozen states came soon after. "Naturally nobody could turn to other things and the ideological crisis in the Congress had to stand down". The basic political issues which were taken cognizance of in 1962 were not attended to even in 1967. The credibility gap between the Congress and the people widened, and the party faced the general elections in 1967 with a poor image and a poor organizational structure. "There was not that sense of communication between the people and the party, so essential for winning elections", said Chavan. "The results came as a deep disappointment to the Congress. After the elections in 1967 we sat down in the Working Committee for three or four days to review the reverses. During the process of self-criticism, we felt that if at all we wanted to remove this gap between the people and the Congress, we had to re-capture the spirit of Bhubaneswar. We went into details, critically examined our programmes and policies. The result was the ten-point economic programme adopted by the Congress in 1967 at Delhi. Our policies became a little more categorical. A more specific content was given to the economic programme. The decision to nationalize banks was a symbol of the new determination of the Congress to reshape itself and be in tune with the aspirations of the masses." In Chavan's opinion it was the acceptance

by the Congress of the ten-point programme that intensified the inner contradictions in the Congress and brought about the cleavage in it. "Serious differences in approach that had till then remained latent inside the Congress came into the open. In fact, the implementation of the ten-point economic programme ultimately proved to be the catalytic agent for the split in the Congress."

Chavan further 'said' that when the Congress met at Faridabad in 1969, he brought about some sort of a compromise on the political resolution, but on the economic policy there was virtual confusion as a result of the infighting in the party. "We had appointed three panels—one to discuss financial and economic programme, the other organizational matters, and the third political issues. These three panels sat with different groups of members of the AICC. I was the chairman of the political group. I do not know exactly what happened in the other two groups. I heard later that in the economic panel some of the members were critical of Morarji Desai who was in the chair, and ultimately this panel could not produce any report. The AICC passed only the political resolution at this session. The whole process of divergence was symbolized by the speech of Mr. Nijalingappa at the plenary session. He practically challenged all the basic policies of the Congress. And coming as it did from the Congress president, his speech gave public expression to the ideological cleavage that existed in the leadership of the Congress."

Asked whether there was an active group in the Congress which supported Nijalingappa's views, Chavan 'said': "There were ultimately some like-minded people functioning together." He was opposed to the policies of this group and his view was that the Congress was a political instrument history had given to the country to play a very vital role. "I hold the view that its policies should be 'left of centre', by and large, and will have to be so in the future too. This is the inevitable role a progressive national party in the present circumstances in India has to play, and therefore, I could not approve of the views expressed by Nijalingappa."

He, however, felt that the two groups within the

Congress should work together as far as possible, so that the party would not break into two. "I never thought at that time that the party was going to split. I knew this was the assessment of the Prime Minister. But Nijalingappa's views came as a shock to many of us. The Prime Minister herself had made Nijalingappa accept the Congress presidency and allowed others who supported him to come into the Congress Working Committee. She has been in the Working Committee for the last twelve years or more and Nijalingappa's views were known to her. But she could not have guessed that he would go to the extent he did at Faridabad."

Her intention in supporting Nijalingappa in the beginning was perhaps to keep persons of different approaches together as far as possible. "I too felt that this was necessary. Ideological differences were one thing, but it was necessary for the Congress to have the support of the accepted leaders of the different States, even though they may have slight differences in their approach to the policies and programmes. I never looked at these two groups as totally irreconcilable. I felt we should work with them and try to bring them together." When Chavan was asked how conflicting views on basic issues could be reconciled, he said: "Well, this is what we tried to do. There were forces that pulled the Congress to the right and others to the left. I had cordial relationship with both the groups and did my best to see that we all pulled together. My stand on the ideological issue was clear. I was not with the 'go-slow' group which looked with suspicion on new and progressive policies."

He tried to act as a bridge between the two groups in the hope that he would be able to save the Congress from splitting into two. "You will see that I tried to work with the two different groups—two different tendencies, I should say. My effort was to reconcile them, to keep them together so that the Congress could remain intact. What I did in Faridabad, in Bangalore, and what I tried to do later through the unity resolution in August 1969 were all parts of this effort. I and others who thought alike wanted to stop the Congress leaders from expelling the Prime Minister."

party, because I wanted the Congress to be saved. If they had listened to our appeal, the split could perhaps have been avoided. But they were absolutely keen on precipitating a crisis."

1. A controversy arose over the correct designation of Giri. Niren De, the Attorney-General of India, held that till a President was elected, Giri was only acting President. In fact, in July when Giri wanted to quit his office and contest the presidential election, De addressed him in a communication as 'Dear Mr. Acting President.'

Dr. Zakir Husain, the President of India, died on May 3, 1969, a week after the Faridabad session of the Congress. Varahagiri Venkata Giri, the Vice-President of India, was sworn in as interim President. Speculation about the election of the President began within a day or two. As the majority party in Parliament, the session would highlight his role.

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Chavan's relationship with the two groups in the Congress, according to his own statement, was cordial. But the selection of the Congress nominee for the office of President of India in July 1969 and the subsequent events spoiled his connection with both the groups. His repeated efforts to bring the two together and save the Congress from splitting into two political parties were interpreted as a sign of vacillation. He was accused of sitting on the fence and of even hunting with the hound and running with the hare. A close, chronological examination of the events leading to the split and of the pulls and pressures inside the party after the Faridabad session would highlight his role.

Anatomy of the Split

Congress had a special responsibility about the election of S. Nijalingappa, the Congress president, immediately cancelled his proposed European tour, because he was expected to be in Delhi to work out a consensus about the Congress nominee for the office of the President. Ten days later, however, he announced he was going to Europe scheduled on a three-week tour of Europe in the last week of May. Before, he met V. V. Giri, the interim President and discussed with him the election of a successor to Dr. Zakir Husain. Giri told him he hoped that the past practice of choosing the Vice-President for the office of the President would be continued. According to a statement made by Giri later, the Congress president urged him to stand for election as President. Giri put off his scheduled visit to Bhutan in May to be able to stay on in Delhi. Some Congress leaders were in favour of electing a senior party leader with a strong will and capacity to take firm and quick decisions. While searching for a candidate, these party bosses had their eyes on the general elections scheduled for 1972, in which they feared no party would emerge with a clear majority.

Chavan did not give serious thought to the selection of the Congress nominee. He felt there was no hurry about it. When he met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi a week after the death of Dr. Zakir Husain, the subject came up, and she is believed to have asked him for his opinion. He replied that he had not given any positive thought to it, and added this was a matter that should be given very careful thought. He, however, thought that the past practice of automatically elevating the Vice-President to the President's office required re-examination. She did not express a final view on the matter.

2. Giving evidence on April 21, 1970 in the Supreme Court of India, V.V. Giri recalled how Nijalingappa had assured him of his whole-hearted support with his right hand raised in the air as a token of his solemn resolve. According to Giri, Nijalingappa told him: "You can depend upon my support. You know mine is the last word in the matter. I enjoin upon you to do what I myself do. I keep three mythical monkeys on my table (proclaiming as they do 'I hear no evil', 'I speak no evil', 'I see no evil'). I ask you to observe the same conduct as is attributed to these monkeys and everything will be all right."

ing he telephoned Chavan and said he would like to meet him. Chavan said: "Mr. Speaker, why should you come to me? Indicate some time and I will come to you." But Sanjiva Reddi replied that he had a personal matter to discuss for which he must go to Chavan.

When he met Chavan the next morning, he said the Prime Minister wanted to know whether he was willing to be the Congress candidate and that she had given him a hint that he should contest.³ Chavan told him that if the Prime Minister had the inclination to support him, he would certainly welcome his candidature. Besides being the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Reddi was a former Congress president and Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Chavan thought Reddi would be a good candidate. The Speaker was planning to leave India on a European tour soon after Parliament adjourned on May 19, and was in a hurry to meet the leaders who would be responsible for the selection of the Congress candidate.

Before her departure on a five-day visit to Afghanistan on June 5, Indira Gandhi held talks with several Congress leaders, including deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Nijalingappa, Chavan, Kamaraj, Jagjivan Ram, Sardar Swaran Singh, and the Chief Ministers of some States. Her discussions were inconclusive, but there was general agreement that a final decision be put off till mid-June. The beginning of June saw an exodus of Congress leaders and Cabinet ministers from Delhi. A few of them went abroad. Congress president Nijalingappa went to Europe "on a fact-finding tour." After his visit to Yugoslavia, Italy, and Germany, he said in London: "I am finding out how parties and governments work in other countries." It would not have been possible for him to find in any of the parties in these countries a situation parallel to what existed in his own party, nor could he have gathered any know-how

3. G. K. Reddy wrote in *The Hindu*, June 19, 1969: "Congress party by and large was in favour of Sanjiva Reddi who had been assured of support by several opposition parties in Parliament and the State legislatures. At one stage the Prime Minister was also inclined to support his candidature."

to meet the challenges that faced him on his return to India. He called a meeting of the CWC for June 19. During the week preceding the meeting, there was intense political activity in New Delhi. A meeting of the CPB was expected to be called to discuss the choice of the party's nominee for the presidency. Nijalingappa, Kamaraaj, S. K. Patil, and other senior leaders had by then hardened in their opinion that a tried and trusted Congressman—in other words a member of the syndicate—should be chosen as the Congress nominee. Most of them, though not all of them, agreed that Sanjiva Reddi would be a good choice. Although he had a large measure of support among the party bosses, there was no unanimity over his candidature. Morarji Desai, Nijalingappa, and Kamaraaj were not without personal ambitions. It was not surprising that even king-makers should feel tempted to think in terms of themselves becoming kings.

Nijalingappa announced on June 16 that the CPB (Congress Parliamentary Board) would meet to select its nominee for the presidency within a week. There was no clear-cut decision in the Prime Minister's group or in the syndicate about the Congress nominee. Kamaraaj moved into the arena and tried his hand at playing the game of consensus. Although he had no official sanction, by habit he had become a 'consensus' man. He went to Chavan's residence on June 17. When the question of the Congress nominee was raised, Kamaraaj told Chavan: "No Giri." He said Sanjiva Reddi would be a good choice, but he had not made up his mind who should be the nominee. The next day he and Nijalingappa had separate meetings with the Prime Minister. Endless series of high-level consultations went on among the Congress leaders on June 17 and 18. A day prior to the meeting of the CWC Indira Gandhi called on Giri. It was believed she met the President at the latter's request. He expressed his desire to be the President and told her what he had said to Nijalingappa. She did not make any commitment to Giri, but said she was working for a consensus with other parties. She made no promises, gave him no hopes. Later she met Nijalingappa, Atulya Ghosh, Morarji Desai,

Sanjiva Reddi, Kamaraj, Jagjivan Ram, and the Congress Chief Ministers who were in Delhi at that time.

On the evening of June 18, Indira Gandhi sent word to Chavan that a few people were meeting at her house and wanted him to join them. He went to 1 Safdarjung Road.⁴ Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Sardar Swaran Singh were already with the Prime Minister and they were discussing the nomination of the Congress candidate. Jagjivan Ram mentioned that Sanjiva Reddi had gone to him and that the latter's name was being mentioned as the Congress nominee. Chavan told the Prime Minister and his other Cabinet colleagues of Kamaraj's view. He also said Sanjiva Reddi had met him and asked him for his support. What Indira Gandhi perhaps wanted to do at this meeting was to decide on her strategy if Nijalingappa called a meeting of the CPB to nominate the Congress candidate in the next couple of days. Chavan told them that instead of discussing the matter in a full meeting of the CPB, the Prime Minister and the Congress president should sit together and sort it out.

The Prime Minister told her senior Cabinet colleagues that she had no candidate of her own, but wanted the Congress to select a person who would be acceptable to the opposition parties as well. She did not want the process of selection and the political manoeuvres associated with it to split the Congress and worsen its relations with the opposition parties. Chavan 'said': "At this meeting the Prime Minister did not put forward any proposal in favour of Giri or anyone else." No formal decision was taken, but there was agreement that the nomination be postponed.

Chavan had got the impression during an earlier meeting with Indira Gandhi that she was not in favour of Giri. She had also indicated to him her reluctance to lose Jagjivan Ram from the Cabinet and the CWC. As far as he was concerned, the Prime Minister's position was clear to him. Before the Bangalore session of the AICC on July 10, the last occasion Chavan met Indira Gandhi was on June 18, except during the CWC meet-

4. The Prime Minister's residence, just about 100 yards from Chavan's residence.

9 whether he would consult the opposition parties on the choice of the candidate, Nijalingappa said with a chuckle: "We will ask the opposition to vote for our candidate."⁶ Indira Gandhi did not attend the first day of the AICC session as she was indisposed. She had a throat infection. She sent a note on economic policy which she had "jotted down in a hurry—in about 1 1/2 hours—containing points which other people had made but which I thought could form the basis of discussion in the Working Committee." The 'other people' were probably the members of the radical group inside the Congress, commonly known as the 'Young Turks.'⁷ Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, Krishna Kant, R. K. Sinha, and Chandrajeet Yadav, all Young Turks, had sent the CWC "an outline for national economic policies" for inclusion in the official resolution. The Prime Minister's 1500-word note suggested nationalization of five or six major banks, radical change in industrial licensing policy to curb the power of monopoly forces, profit-sharing by workers, immediate nationalization of import of raw materials, curb on restrictive trade practices, and vigorous implementation of land reforms.

The note had a tortuous passage. At the CWC meeting, it was handed over to Sadiq Ali, the Congress general secretary, by Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Minister for Industrial Development and member of the CWC. Sadiq Ali read it aloud. At that time the CWC was discussing C. Subramaniam's draft resolution on economic policy. Only a carbon copy of the Prime Minister's note was received by Sadiq Ali, and the original was with Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. Nijalingappa was of the view that the CWC need not take the note into consideration as it was addressed neither to any office bearer of the

6. *The Hindu*, July 10, 1969.

7. Dr. S.D. Sharma, Congress (R) General Secretary, deposed on May 19, 1970 in the Election Symbol Case, in answer to a question about the Young Turks, that there was no specific group, but often the term was used for those who wanted speedy implementation of the party's economic programme. He added: "The name of Y. B. Chavan was also mentioned at times." He mentioned the names of Mohan Dharia, Chandra Shekhar, Krishna Kant, C. Subramaniam, Chandrajeet Yadav and some others who, he said, were described as "Young Turks."

AICC nor to the CWC. Nevertheless, the note was discussed by the CWC and it completely deflected the discussion on economic policies.

In the absence of the Prime Minister, Chavan had to bear the brunt of that day's discussion on the note. When she arrived the next day, the note was again discussed. Some members demanded that it should be accepted in toto. But there was opposition to it. S. K. Patil said that he would rather face a split in the party than accept bank nationalization. Kammaraj and Atulya Ghosh wanted the note to be sent back to the Government for immediate implementation. Finally, Chavan was asked to prepare a compromise resolution on the basis of the note. On July 11 he worked hard on it the whole day, consulting the Prime Minister, the deputy Prime Minister, and other colleagues and produced a draft resolution incorporating the substance of Indira Gandhi's ideas and meeting the objections raised by some CWC members. The desire of both the groups to avoid an open confrontation and the reluctance of the syndicate to oppose the Prime Minister on a sensitive issue like bank nationalization helped him to succeed in his effort. His draft resolution, passed unanimously by the CWC on July 11, called upon the Central and State governments to take necessary steps to expeditiously implement the programmes mentioned in the note. It did not refer to the controversial issue of social control of banks or of nationalization, but the Prime Minister's note was appended to the resolution.

At the end of the CWC meeting which lasted till late in the evening on July 11, Congress president Nijalingappa abruptly announced that the CPB would meet the next day during the lunch recess to nominate the Congress candidate for the office of the President of India. As the members were coming out of the CWC meeting, Indira Gandhi turned to Chavan and asked him what he was doing after dinner and whether they could meet for some time. He said he was free. Since he was not feeling well, he went to his room in the Raj Bhawan where some other senior members of the Cabinet were also staying, and took rest. After dinner, she sent for him. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was with her. She mentioned that the names of Giri and Jagjivan Ram

were under consideration. But Chavan requested him to discuss the issue with Kamaraj and Morarji Desai.

The next morning, on July 12, Morarji Desai moved the resolution on economic policy in the AICC. Chavan had misgivings about what Morarji Desai would say in his speech, because the resolution was imposed on Desai. In the CWC meeting it was at first suggested that Chavan should move the resolution, for he had drafted it. But S. K. Patil said that since the resolution was on economic policy and it was accepted by the CWC, Morarji Desai would be the proper person to move it. That was how Desai got into the act, though rather unwillingly.

That morning Chavan was fully preoccupied with the economic resolution he had drafted. He 'said': "Few I would have to listen carefully to Morarji Desai, because I felt his remarks might dilute the positive aspects of the resolution. My fears proved correct. His speech which lasted nearly an hour was completely at variance and out of tune with the spirit of the resolution. Instead of supporting and speaking on its positive aspects, he gave his own defence—a defence for not doing anything. He spoke of social control of the banks and said that whatever was needed had already been done, and as far as the ten-point programme was concerned, nothing much remained to be done."

After Morarji Desai had moved the resolution, Chavan spoke for about 25 minutes. He said that socialism presupposes "a structural change in the economic relationship of different classes" and that since such a change had not been brought about in India, a new front was necessary. He described the Prime Minister's note as the reflection of a restless mind and an honest appraisal of the economic situation in India. He further said that it was difficult for the Congress to trace its steps. He knew nationalization of banks was only a question of time and added: "The directions have been set and history has accepted these directions."

Soon after his speech, Chavan became aware of the PB meeting scheduled for one o'clock. He had a hurried talk with V. P. Naik, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He told him Indira Gandhi would sponsor the name of Jagjivan Ram. Naik said that morning he

had heard about it, because Jagjivan Ram had gone to him and asked him to speak to Chavan. Chavan told him that the suggestion to nominate Jagjivan Ram came too late and it would be very difficult to get it through. At one stage he had thought Jagjivan Ram would be a good candidate, but at that time the Prime Minister had not approved of the idea.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed came over to where Chavan was sitting in the AICC pandal. The latter told Ahmed that he wished the meeting of the CPB could be postponed and that it was too late for him to change his commitment to vote for Sanjiva Reddi. Ahmed said: "But the Prime Minister wants Jagjivan Ram's name." Chavan replied: "If the Prime Minister wants it, it is all right, but why not persuade the Prime Minister to get the meeting postponed so that we can meet again in Delhi and decide the issue?" The operative part of what he said was that in view of the likely differences that might arise in the CPB, the best course would be to postpone the CPB meeting. But his words ("If the Prime Minister wants it, it is all right") were interpreted by Ahmed as Chavan's willingness to support Jagjivan Ram's name. Ahmed was persuaded to go to the Prime Minister to request her to postpone the proposed meeting. About fifteen minutes to one o'clock, the Prime Minister asked Chavan to meet her. When Chavan went to her room, Ahmed was sitting with her. During the two fateful interviews Chavan had with the Prime Minister in Bangalore, Ahmed was present. Chavan suggested to the Prime Minister that she should get the CPB meeting postponed. He wanted to avoid a clash between the syndicate and the Prime Minister and was not interested in defeating her candidate. He thought he would work for a consensus in Delhi and smoothen out the differences. But Indira Gandhi, perhaps rightly, told him that she would not take the responsibility for a postponement of the meeting of the CPB. Chavan told her that in a way he was committed to support Sanjiva Reddi.

Then minutes later the CPB met. Morarji Deasai presided and S. K. Patil seconded the name proposed. Indira Gandhi said she wanted to

obtain a national consensus on a candidate, but later supported the name of Jagjivan Ram which was proposed by Ahmed. The members of the CPB decided on the Congress nominee by show of hands. Kamaraj, Patil, Chavan, and Desai voted for Reddi. Jagjivan Ram and Nijalingappa did not vote. By a majority of 4 to 2, the CPB meeting nominated Reddi as the Congress candidate. The meeting also decided that Nijalingappa should have further talks with Indira Gandhi before announcing the decision. She warned the members that the decision would have serious repercussions. Nijalingappa announced the name of the Congress candidate without meeting the Prime Minister. A couple of hours later, V. V. Giri announced in Delhi his decision to contest the election as an independent candidate. He said: "While I have respect for those who have decided against my nomination, I may be permitted in all humility to disagree with their stand.... The highest office of the land must be one that is above party politics." He was grieved that the Prime Minister had not suggested his name.

The AICC members were disturbed—some were happy, others angry—about the decision. Some of them felt that the CPB should not have decided the issue in the manner it did and wanted the AICC to discuss the nomination. Others thought that the CPB's decision should be adhered to at all costs. According to the Congress constitution, the CPB's decision is final and cannot be questioned by the AICC.

The nomination of Reddi was not the first occasion when Congress bosses had gone against the wishes of Prime Minister. When Nehru wanted the first Indian Governor-General of India, C. Rajagopalachari, to become the first President of India, he was out-voted. In 1957 the Congress bosses, including Maulana Azad, allowed Dr. Rajendra Prasad to continue as President of India for a second term against the wishes of Nehru who wanted Dr. Radhakrishnan to become President. On these occasions, however, no violent confrontation took place and Nehru's authority as head of the Government was not compromised, because his position in the party was unassailable.

Indira Gandhi has considerable charm and tact and

can use them to good advantage when she chooses to do so. But in Bangalore she operated in a closed shell, leaving her friends and foes alike guessing about her intentions. She has been all along firmer than Nehru in dealing with the party bosses. In 1967 when Congress president Kammaraj insisted that Dr. Radhakrishnan be allowed to continue as President of India for at least one more year, she had her way and got Dr. Zakir Husain elected. In Bangalore also she could have had her way. She failed, because she had deliberately cut off her lines of communication with most of her colleagues in the CPB and also because she underestimated the strength of the syndicate's move to isolate her. She did not reveal her mind nor did she seek the support of CPB members for her candidate/s till a few hours before the meeting. Nijalingappa stated in his letter to her on October 28, 1968 that she "did not in fact, mention any name to me till two hours before we met in the Parliamentary Board to decide on the candidate on July 12." Perhaps she had no candidate until the last moment. Her main strategy was to defeat the syndicate's candidate, whoever he was.

The nomination of Reddi naturally upset her. She felt that she—the Prime Minister of the country—had been cornered and out-voted by the party bosses in a deliberate attempt to challenge her authority. She was angry. At a press conference in Bangalore on July 14, when she was asked whether she was aware of any change in the attitude of any member of the CPB at the eleventh hour, she replied: "I don't know that. Attitude was not made known to me before." She was further asked: "What about Chavan's vote?" She answered: "You should ask him."

Question: Were you not aware that in the Parliamentary Board there was a substantial majority for Mr. Reddi before you left Delhi?

Answer: I am sorry. I trust people. When they tell me something, it is very difficult to think that it is not true.

Question: There is a feeling among supporters of Mr. Reddi that you did not take them into confidence as to whom you were going to sponsor. Since you don't give your mind, how do you expect them to

give their mind?

Answer: I don't think any purpose is served by going into details. I asked their opinions and advised on numerous occasions. I was not at all thinking of electing any particular person against everyone's wishes.

Chavan was grieved by the Prime Minister's decision, a part of which was evidently directed against him. At a meeting of Maharashtra Congress leaders in Bombay the next day, he gave his reason for supporting Reddi. He said he thought Reddi had the necessary experience and national image to become the president of India. As far as he was concerned, "there was nothing like any political grouping." He did not have any plan. He 'said': "I do not think there was any such plan, because Kamaraj became committed to Sanjiva Reddi, as far as I know, only a few days before the decision was taken."

Chavan made the mistake of not discussing this with Indira Gandhi after June 18. He could have informed her in advance whom he would support. In Bombay he had brought about a compromise on the emergency resolution and one would have expected him to have reached about an understanding on the nomination of Congress candidate also. Chavan 'said': "The only way we could think of was to postpone the meeting. It was not possible that had we met in Delhi in a calmer atmosphere probably things would have been different. We could not have done anything more than what we did. In the atmosphere of spiralling suspicion inside the Congress, he thought it was best that he kept his opinions to himself as almost everyone else, including the Prime Minister, did. He did not discuss Reddi with the Congress president either, "nor had Kamaraj ever mentioned Sanjiva Reddi" to him. He had mentioned to Kamaraj during the course of the CWC meeting in Delhi in June that he thought Reddi would be a good choice. "I never mentioned the name outside the Working Committee or at any special meeting", he 'said'. What he had told Reddi "must have been conveyed to the Congress president because the Prime Minister had said to me that I was also thinking of supporting Sanjiva

9. G. K. Reddy, *The Hindu*, July 18, 1969.
 itself...." (*Times of India*, January 23, 1971).

8. On January 21, 1971 addressing a meeting in Faridkot, Punjab, Desai from her Government at the party's Faridkot session revealed that she had decided to resign.

After the nomination of Sanjiva Reddi, there was near panic among Congressmen. They feared grave consequences would follow. The Prime Minister never panicked—at least did not give any visible signs of panic. She maintained her sphinx-like silence and planned her strategy. She met the President soon after her return from Bangalore and informed him of some of the steps she was taking. The President was very unhappy and annoyed and was believed to have told her that he had expected a better deal. He wanted to resign straight-away and asked her to make necessary interim arrangements. She requested him not to resign immediately but to wait for at least two more days. On July 16 the Prime Minister relieved Morarji Desai of the Finance portfolio, and she herself took it over. Desai resigned in protest.⁸ She asked him to continue as deputy Prime Minister and choose any portfolio other than Finance. But the proud Morarji felt that his self-respect demanded that he should resign forthwith. Once before, when Lal Bahadur Shastri had invited him to join the Cabinet at the request of Chavan, he had declined it because he felt it was "not consistent with my self-respect and dignity" to be ranked third instead of second in the Cabinet.

Chavan's position was very delicate. "The next target on the list will be Mr. Chavan unless the party leaders are able to regain the political initiative in the meantime. Meanwhile pressures are building up from the syndicate side for Mr. Chavan's resignation as a prelude to a no-confidence motion against Mrs. Gandhi in the Congress Parliamentary Party."⁹ His position was far from clear to the leaders of the feuding groups, but his personal equation with most of them continued to be good. He was certainly not with the syndicate. But neither the syndicate nor the Prime Minister's group believed this. Chavan said: "I never had anything in common with the syndicate members. I could have

gone with them if I wanted to. But I would have been untrue to myself if I did that. I would have been untrue to my whole background, my training, my beliefs if I went with them."

A day after Morarji Desai's exit Chavan met the Prime Minister and requested her to meet Desai for a frank and free discussion and settle their differences. She was prepared to meet Desai but could not accept his suggestion that the Finance portfolio should be restored to Desai as a precondition for the meeting. The same afternoon she and Desai had a long meeting. She told him that it would be difficult for her to go back on her decision to relieve him of the Finance portfolio and that she had taken the step in order to fulfil her responsibilities for implementing the economic policy resolution passed by the AICC in Bangalore. She accepted his resignation. Desai was bitter and felt that he had been made a victim of the power struggle inside the Congress. About his own role during these days Chavan 'said': "My role was to bring about reconciliation. I have been misunderstood on this score and criticized by both sides."

On July 18 Indira Gandhi told Chavan when he met her that she was taking immediate steps to nationalize fourteen major banks and gave him a summary of the ordinance under preparation. She informed him in advance that the Cabinet would meet in a few hours to approve the ordinance. Chavan assured her of his full support. Soon after the Cabinet meeting, Chavan attended a meeting of Congress leaders called by Nijalingappa. He 'said': "I informed the leaders that bank nationalization ordinance was about to be issued. As far as I was concerned, there was absolutely no question of dissociating myself from the bold and dynamic policy of the Prime Minister. I told them that they should have no misgivings about my role." He further informed them that although he was not happy over Morarji Desai's exit from the Cabinet, he was not resigning.

The ordinance to nationalize the fourteen major banks was issued the same night. Chavan enthusiastically welcomed the Prime Minister's action. He 'said': "This step will give a new momentum to our economic programmes and strengthen the hands of the Government."

the syndicate after her success in avenging the humiliation suffered by her in Bangalore. The party bosses were hesitant to join battle until the election of the President of India was over. Chavan tried hard to extricate himself from the embarrassment of his 'commitment'. He managed with great difficulty to keep a balance between his strong support to Indira Gandhi in her policies and his fleeting alignment with the syndicate. She signed the nomination paper of Reddi on July 22 in the presence of the members of the CPB when they met and selected Gopal Swarup Pathak as the Congress candidate for the office of the Vice-President of India. It was decided at that meeting that Nijalingappa, though not a member of the CPP, be invited to speak to the members of the CPP to seek support for Reddi. Both the Prime Minister and Nijalingappa had pulled out their diaries and fixed the date for the CPP meeting in an atmosphere of sweet reasonableness. Chavan 'thought' that "despite the differences in between, it looked as though things were settling down." But the basic conflict between the Prime Minister and the party bosses continued to plague the Congress.

The choice before the party was either to give the CWC the status and functions of a politbureau as in the communist system, or to make the Prime Minister as in Britain the leader of the organizational wing also. But the ideological cleavage inside the CWC, the multiplicity of political parties, and their inter-action on one another exposed the Congress to many pulls and pressures and made a clear-cut choice difficult. The Swatantra and the Jan Sangh, the two right-wing parties, were spiritually close to the syndicate, while the CPI(M), the CPI, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam supported Indira Gandhi's group.

As the election to the office of the President of India drew closer, the alignment of forces became sharper. The Swatantra, the Jan Sangh, and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal sponsored Dr. C. D. Deshmukh, a former Finance Minister, as their candidate for the presidency. These parties soon found it difficult to sustain their interest in Deshmukh's election, because their sympathies were with the syndicate and its candidate Reddi. Nijalingappa realized that without the Prime Minister's support

Reddi would not win. She had filed Reddi's nomination papers, but he detected a coolness in her attitude towards Reddi. He and other syndicate leaders decided to seek the support of other political parties for the Congress candidate. In the first week of August, Nijalingappa held talks with non-communist opposition parties behind Indira Gandhi's back. He met Jan Sangh president, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had a breakfast meeting with Swatantra party president N. G. Ranga, and held long parleys with Swatantra leaders M. R. Masani, N. Dandekar, and Dabhyabhai Patel. He also met B. K. D. leader Prakash Vir Shastri, Jan Sangh leader Balraj Madhok, Kashmir leader Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, and others. He did not meet leaders of other political parties in this connection because most of them refused to walk into his parlour.

Meanwhile, the extremists in both the groups inside the Congress began a campaign of recrimination against each other. On August 2 Tarakeshwari Sinha, the Congress MP from Bihar and ardent supporter of Morarji Desai, wrote an article in the Bombay weekly 'Current', questioning the Prime Minister's loyalty to the party, and its cause, challenging her leadership, and charging her with attempts to split the party. Her article stated: "Many people thought she (Indira Gandhi) has more friends in the Communist Party and in the DMK than friends in the Congress and the way she took the crucial decision has not endeared her to her friends in the organization. It seems that the cleavage is much deeper today than ever and no talk of unity can restore the Congress back to the same position.... If the party bosses had not asserted themselves at Bangalore on the presidential nomination, they would have been completely eliminated by the Prime Minister."

When the CPP met on August 6 to mobilize support for Reddi, one of the members questioned the Congress president about Tarakeshwari Sinha's article and asked him what disciplinary action he had taken against her for her attack on the Prime Minister. Instead of categorically dissociating himself from the article, Nijalingappa said that if someone wrote to him about it, he would look into it. The unprecedented uproar that followed sidetracked the main issue before the CPP. The

at generated at this meeting again brought to the surface the tensions inside the Congress. Chavan 'said' at the incident in the CPP "gave the Prime Minister the feeling that they were ganging against her. I think at night or the next day she decided to oppose Sanjaya Reddi. Till then the Prime Minister did not make any serious plans. But I think after that meeting she thought of striking back at the syndicate."

The syndicate was deeply perturbed by the reaction of the CPP which clearly demonstrated that the bosses did not have the majority support in the CPP. It became a distinct possibility that Congress MPs would vote against the Congress nominee in the presidential election. Nijalingappa requested the Prime Minister to issue an appeal in support of Reddi's candidature. She did not make a formal appeal, because she said it might be construed as undue influence on the electors. During Dr. Zakir Husain's election she had made an appeal to the voters in his favour and this was objected to by Madhu Limaye and the matter was raised in the Supreme Court of India. It soon became clear that she had reservations about Reddi's candidature. Many Congress MPs in her group openly criticized Reddi.

Some office bearers of the CPP met her and drew her attention to the mounting speculation about the possibilities of the cross-voting by Congress electors and said that the party would break up if the Congress candidate were defeated. They pointed out that the hesitation of the Prime Minister to issue an appeal due to alleged legal difficulties had created confusion in the minds of Congressmen. The Prime Minister was reported to have told them that she suspected that attempts were afoot to topple her government after the presidential election. The first sign of open revolt against the party bosses was the announcement on August 10 by Arjun Arora, Congress MP and one of the 'Young Turks', that he would vote for Giri and not for the Congress candidate. Asha Bhushan, another Congress MP, sought the permission of Nijalingappa to follow his conscience in casting his vote.

A high-level conclave was held at the Prime Minister's residence on the night of August 11 at which Jagdishwan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Sidhartha San-

ar Ray, the leader of the Bengal Congress legislative party, were present. The leaders discussed the dissatisfactory action inside the party over the action of the syndicate in seeking the support of parties totally opposed to the Congress. A letter demanding freedom of vote was finalized and sent to Nijalingappa over the signatures of Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. The letter stated: "We have not been told as to how and why you have approached the leaders of the Swatantra and Jan Sangh parties when these parties... had openly demanded the removal of the Prime Minister... and had openly opposed the socialist policies, including nationalization of banks..." Nijalingappa's reply to the two leaders evaded the questions raised by them and said: "In all elections we have to approach everyone in the electorate." Elaborating his stand, he said to newsmen that he was seeking the support of opposition parties not because he expected defections from his party but because it was necessary to take extra precautions. He declared that he expected "no split immediately or eventually in the Congress."

It was a cruel quirk of politics that Nijalingappa happened to be the president of the Congress during a most critical period in its history. Though an affable and good-natured person, he was temperamentally and intellectually unsuited to hold together the party in the throes of radical change. His appreciation of historical forces was so vague that he aggravated, perhaps unwittingly, the confusion inside the Congress by his pontifical declarations of policies. He did not help his party or group by his definition of socialism or his patronizing reference to the Prime Minister. His pathetic cry for discipline finally left him a Casablanca on the deck of the old Congress. He said: "I stand for socialism, but not borrowed from here and there or from outside. We have a socialism which has been defined for ages to come. The basis of that socialism is 'sarve janaha sukhamo bhavantu'—that society is best where everyone is happy. This concept was to be implemented." He certainly did not help the progressive elements in the Congress to feel enthusiastic about his policies or his candidate. He told foreign correspondents that the Prime Minister "is expected to go on till 1972. I have

no doubt about it. I have told her", implying thereby that the Prime Minister was dependent on him for her continuance in office.

In the confused atmosphere of divided loyalties and uncertain political alignments, Chavan's position continued to be vague. Kamaraj called on him on August 12, evidently to seek his support. He told Kamaraj that he still supported Reddi but wanted the two groups to come together so that a split in the party could be averted. When Chavan met Indira Gandhi the same day, he informed her that he stood by his commitment to vote for Reddi and requested her to find some way out of the crisis. But she was convinced that the syndicate was determined to dislodge her after installing Reddi as President. She wrote to Nijalingappa on August 13 that there was considerable resentment "among members of the State legislatures regarding the steps to be taken to make electoral arrangements with the Jan Sangh and Swatantra parties in the forthcoming presidential election." She added that "the members have expressed the view that after these arrangements, the basis on which the party had agreed to the nomination of Shri Sanjiva Reddi has unfortunately disappeared." When the CPP met on August 14 many members appealed to the Prime Minister to save the party from disintegration. With tears in her eyes Tarakeshwari Sinha told the Prime Minister: "You can take any action against me. Even if you expel me from the party I am prepared to go, because I want the Congress to be saved." Indira Gandhi's reaction was firm and unflinching. She said that the realization of the mistake was belated.

The battle lines were drawn and a clash became imminent. Nijalingappa issued a 700-word appeal to the Congress legislators to support Reddi and warned that disciplinary action would be taken against all those who went counter to his whip. Meanwhile, a move was initiated by the Prime Minister's supporters to requisition a special session of the AICC to censure Nijalingappa for his talks with the Swatantra and the Jan Sangh leaders. The Congress Party found itself in total disarray on the eve of the presidential election. Division in the ranks of the Congress in the States became sharp and the prospects of victory for Reddi doubtful.

There was another exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and Nijalingappa on 15/16 August 1969. Demanding the right of free vote, the Prime Minister said: "Giving the option to the members in the extraordinary situation to act, according to the dictates of their conscience, would rejuvenate the party, restore confidence and strengthen unity." Ridiculing the demand for free vote, Nijalingappa wrote back to the Prime Minister: "History does not record of an instance where a Prime Minister, after proposing her party's candidate, not only works against him, but proclaims her support for the candidate of the opposition. If the tragic fact was not staring us, I would have thought of it to be a tale from 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

The voting for the election of the President of India was held on August 16 in the central hall of Parliament House in New Delhi and in the seventeen State capitals throughout India. After Nijalingappa's office had contacted most of the State capitals and tabulated electoral figures, there was jubilation in the syndicate ranks. Morarji Desai, S. K. Patil, Atulya Ghosh, Kammaraj, and Chavan were asked by Nijalingappa to attend an important meeting at 6 p.m. at his office. Chavan did not attend the meeting. When Morarji Desai arrived, he said in a cheerful tone: "We are winning." The nature of the disciplinary action to be taken against Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed for defying the Congress president was considered by the meeting. A decision was deferred, but the sentiment in the syndicate favoured strong action.

Chavan was of the view that the senior party leaders should sit together and resolve the issues. Supporters of the Prime Minister, including the 'Young Turks', met in a mid-night session and discussed the possibilities of averting the crisis. The mood of the rank and file of the party was for conciliation and unity. But the party bosses and the Prime Minister were in no mood to discuss the differences among them. Suspicion and fear of one another had by then made them adopt irreconcilable attitudes. The Prime Minister wanted to ensure the prestige and authority of her office, while the syndicate wanted to hold her under check.

When Kammaraj met Chavan on August 17 and requested

the basis of a socio-economic programme." Mohan
aria, one of the 'Young Turks', said at the meeting
at his leader Chavan was making all efforts to pre-
serve the unity of the party.¹⁰
Both the groups were perturbed about the inevitable
all towards an open confrontation and the danger of
split. But the syndicate seemed more concerned
out enforcing discipline than preserving unity. Nija-
gappa called a meeting of the CWC for August 25
to discuss the nature of the disciplinary action to be
taken against the Prime Minister and her two Cabinet
colleagues, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Jagjivan Ram.

11

In Search of Unity

meeting of the Congress Working Committee on August 25 was sensational. There was speculation that the Committee would take disciplinary action against the Prime Minister. After Nijalingappa had spoken and more and discussion could start, Chavan told the Committee members that having gone through a difficult period, they should now try to find a way of pulling together. The members wanted to know how it could be done. He told them he had a draft resolution and he read it out. Chavan said: "I think it was S. K. Patil who said that although the draft seemed to be all right, the allegations made against the Congress president of collusion with the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra parties should be dismissed. Some members immediately took up this issue. I agreed to absolve the Congress president of any lives in meeting the leaders of other parties. After doing this, the Committee reverted to my draft resolution. With the alteration of one or two words, it was unanimously adopted by the Working Committee. I heaved a sigh of relief. I felt a terrible crisis had been averted. But subsequent events proved I was mistaken."

Chavan's resolution by-passed the issue of disciplinary action by referring to the "mistakes made on all sides

1. August 28, 1969.
2. August 30, 1969.

in the wake of the conflict of ideas and approaches." Defining the roles of the party president and the Prime Minister, it said that they were not rival centres of power, but the Prime Minister "has wider responsibilities to the country as a whole." It asked Congress members to work for unity with commitment to the accepted policies of the party. The resolution was a triumph for Indira Gandhi. She welcomed it and said: "The Congress party continues to reflect the wishes of the rank and file. It has the ability to make adjustments." She further said "it is all over." The war between the two factions was temporarily halted by Chavan's "peace resolution." His efforts were praised by many commentators. Nandan Kagal, the political commentator of "The Indian Express" stated: "Chavan was, of course, the only person in a position to play a mediatory role. He was the only leading Congressman who was not wholly identified with one faction or the other during the power struggle. But this strength was also partly a weakness in the oppressive atmosphere of suspicion and malice which gripped Delhi in the crisis days. To be non-aligned in a power struggle can be a very sensitive and delicate posture. In a factional fight non-alignment can be misunderstood as the worst kind of double-dealing and the motives of the peace-maker are more suspect than the intentions of the feuding groups." The "Economic" of London said: "Mr. Chavan, the Home Minister and easily the most influential person in the Cabinet after Mrs. Gandhi, threw his whole weight behind the compromise which turned out to meet her terms very nicely."

Nijalingappa, who had gone to his home town in Mysore for taking rest after many weeks of tension in Delhi, said: "I am getting back to normal blood pressure." But very soon the situation again became abnormal. Harsh comments and statements were hurled by the leaders against one another, although the resolution of August 25 had asked party members "not to say or do anything which is likely to widen the breach." Nijalingappa himself spoke of the need to curb the "perso-

ality cult" (of Indira Gandhi) and of the "dangers of dictatorship in the country." S. K. Patil accused the Prime Minister of being a near-communist.

Chavan's embarrassing "commitment" was over after a presidential poll, and he unreservedly backed the Prime Minister's moves to consolidate her gains. Some servers, however, continued to question Chavan's role in ring the crisis in the Congress and accused him of being a 'fence-sitter.' In the tragic drama of passions and prejudices inside the Congress, Chavan was, however, a lonely and unhappy man, very much like Jawaharlal Nehru at the time of the Tripura session of the Congress thirty years ago. Nehru's role as the mediator between the party bosses and Subhas Bose in Congress crisis of 1939 has many parallels to Chavan's role in 1969.

Giving his assessment of the situation in the Congress towards the end of September 1969, Chavan 'said': "If we were to make a general review of the period, a sort of an aggressive action was started by the syndicate members. They were rather angry about the unity resolution and were searching for ways to start a counter-attack. The first sign of the attack came from Tamil Nadu over the question of the Prime Minister's visit to Madras."

On the initiative of C. Subramaniam, a meeting was arranged between Kamaraj and Indira Gandhi in New Delhi on September 22 to seek a rapprochement between the two. But no understanding was reached. Kamaraj accused Subramaniam of continuing his attempt to isolate him from the organization and of setting Congress workers against him whenever possible. He threatened to boycott the arrangements made by Subramaniam for the Prime Minister's visit to Tamil Nadu on the ground that he had not been consulted. A few days before the Prime Minister's visit to Madras, Subramaniam resigned from the presidency of the Pradesh Congress Committee. He accused the syndicate, particularly Kamaraj, of taking inflexible positions and said that Kamaraj's prejudice against the Prime Minister bordered on hatred. Describing the course of events, Chavan 'said': "The trouble in Madras was some sort of a preparation for further action elsewhere. In Uttar Pradesh also there

was trouble. Kamalapati and others had a feeling that they were being discriminated against by Gupta. There were also reports from different areas that a counter-attack was coming."

Chavan met Nijalingappa and asked him to call a meeting of the AICC and the CWC. He told the president that the atmosphere of cold war in the Congress must be cleared by all of them coming together. "He agreed with me. But I don't know what was in his mind. It is just possible that his other colleagues were afraid that if the CWC and the AICC meetings were held, the Prime Minister's group would oust the Congress president. I wanted the AICC to meet, because I wanted the Committee to endorse the unity resolution so that it could become the accepted policy of the party. A date was fixed for the meeting of the CWC in October, but Nijalingappa changed it, because he said it was not convenient for him. Another date was fixed and that also was changed at the last minute."

"The smouldering power struggle erupted into a fresh confrontation between the syndicate and the Prime Minister over the membership of C. Subramaniam in the CWC. The syndicate's contention was that after his resignation of the presidency of the TNCC, he had ceased to be a member of the AICC and of the CWC also.

The Prime Minister's inner council, which at that time consisted of Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Swaran Singh, and occasionally Chavan, Dinesh Singh, Uma Shanker Dixit, and C. Subramaniam came to know of Nijalingappa's move to disqualify Subramaniam. The inner council met on October 9 for 3 hours, from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. and finalized the strategy to meet the syndicate's moves over Subramaniam's membership of the CWC.

At joint letter signed by Indira Gandhi, Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Swaran Singh was sent to Nijalingappa a few minutes before dawn on October 9. The letter protested against "the president's arbitrary order removing Shri C. Subramaniam from the

3. The Chief Minister of U.P. who was supported by the syndicate.

Working Committee and Shri Kamalapati Tripathi, Shri Kakani Venkataratnam and some others from various offices in the organization on the basis of some resolutions passed two decades ago." It warned the Congress president that his action would "aggravate the situation, make the implementation of the unity resolution more difficult" and asked him to convene a meeting of the CWC on October 15, to be followed by a special session of the AICC before November 15, to consider the entire political situation. In a scathing reply to the Prime Minister, Nijalingappa said: "I have sent no communication to Shri Subramaniam. I have never been in the habit of working arbitrarily. Such charges should not be loosely levelled by responsible colleagues." He also said there was no need for an urgent meeting of the CWC.

The Prime Minister's group began a vigorous signature campaign all over India to gather support from the AICC members for the move to elect a new Congress president. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Jagjivan Ram, and Uma Shanker Dixit took the initiative, and Chavan was one of the signatories. They wanted the CWC to convene a meeting of the AICC under article 12(b)(d) of the Congress constitution to consider at the earliest possible time the election of a new Congress president in December 1969. The requisition was signed by 405 of the total of 705 AICC delegates.

The syndicate members were dazed by this totally unexpected and devastating counter-attack by the Prime Minister's group. Nijalingappa said in Bangalore on October 21: "I do not know where I stand." Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddi, and Nijalingappa met in Bangalore in an emergency session but were unable to work out a strategy to meet the threat posed to their leadership by the majority of the members of the AICC. Morarji Desai said on October 25 in Patna: "I have been thinking every day, but I have not arrived at any conclusion so far. Satyagraha is definitely one way. But I am not sure what should be the shape of such satyagraha."

The power struggle erupted into public view and manifested itself not only in Delhi but in many State capitals and even in district headquarters. There was near paralysis in the functioning of the Government.

Indira Gandhi said on November 6: "Both party and Government have become immobilized. This is bad not only for the political situation but for any kind of forward progress we are making. The Congress as a party is in a rut. We seem to be digging deeper than going forward."

The objective of the Prime Minister's group was to dismiss Nijalingappa and capture the party apparatus. But there is no provision in the Congress constitution for the removal of Congress president either by the CWC or by the AICC, or even by a plenary session of the Congress. The constitution, made in the days of the freedom struggle, gave Congress president the powers of a commander-in-chief on the battle field and was totally unsuited to democratic functioning. Nevertheless, the opinion of 405 out of the 705 AICC members could not be dismissed as of no consequence by the Congress president and his associates in the CWC.

The Congress Chief Ministers, worried about the prospects of a split in the party, came forward to mediate. Veerendra Patil of Mysore and Hitenendra Desai of Gujarat held parleys with the Prime Minister and the syndicate leaders to bring about an understanding. The mood in the two camps was bitter. The Prime Minister's supporters denounced Nijalingappa as retrograde, reactionary and a captive in the hands of the power-hungry syndicate of aged and evil men. The Prime Minister's own assessment was that all of them with the exception of Kamraj were bitter, brooding men who had no popular base. The syndicate described the Prime Minister as an unpredictable dictator who would make common cause with communists rather than compromise with her colleagues.

The CWC meeting called by Nijalingappa for November 1, 1969 was indeed crucial. The party bosses were at a loss to know what attitude to adopt. Kamraj told the other syndicate leaders that in the CWC, the syndicate's strength was equal to that of the Prime Minister's group and, therefore, the first step was to get rid of C. Subramaniam who "constitutionally had no right to continue on the CWC." He said the first question to be

raised in the CWC should be about Subramaniam's membership. He wanted suspension orders issued against Indira Gandhi, Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. On October 28, three days prior to the CWC meeting, Nijalingappa sent a six-page letter to the Prime Minister, accusing her of indulging in anti-party activities and attempting to split the party. In a surprise move a day prior to the meeting of the CWC, the Congress president suspended C. Subramaniam, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Dr. S. D. Sharma from the CWC. Many uncommitted Congress MPs thought that the action disqualifying the CWC members twelve hours before the CWC meeting was inspired by Kamaraj. Subramaniam was removed after inviting him to attend the meeting and when his continuance in the CWC was the first item on the agenda.

Indira Gandhi and her supporters including Chavan decided to boycott the CWC meeting. They met separately at 1 Safdarjang Road on November 1 at 9.30 a.m. and decided to call an AICC meeting of their own to elect a new president. Nijalingappa and his group met at 7 Jantar Mantar Road, the party's head office. Two CWCs thus came into being, signifying a clear split in the leadership of the Congress. The Prime Minister's group consisted of Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Brahmananda Reddy, Sukhadia, Naik, Subramaniam, Uma Shanker Dixit, and Dr. S. D. Sharma.

Referring to the developments in the first week of November, Chavan 'said': "When we received the notice that they had removed Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Shanker Dayal Sharma, and Subramaniam from the Working Committee, we were shocked. I was really angry. I thought this was very low tactics. It looked as though they were acting according to some sort of a plan. They were trying to secure an artificial majority for themselves. We decided that they shall not have it their way and told them that they should postpone the meeting and withdraw the orders of suspension. When they went ahead with the meeting, we met separately. They were ten and we were also ten. And then Abraham,⁵ as

5. K. C. Abraham, the President of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee.

You know, attended our meeting and their meeting also. Though he did not openly criticize the Prime Minister, I think he was with them (syndicate members). He was with them mentally, politically, and maybe, spiritually also."

The CWC under the presidency of Nijalingappa passed an ambiguous resolution on November 2. The hard-liners in the syndicate wanted to expel Indira Gandhi from the Congress, but they were persuaded to stay their hands for a little while. The resolution said that "in spite of what has happened, even now it is not too late for the Prime Minister and her colleagues to retrace their steps and join in the efforts to restore discipline and unity of the organization." Even after the two Congress Working Committees had met separately, the Congress Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Tripura thought there was still a basis for agreement and tried to stop the Congress from disintegration. They met Chavan and asked him to use his good offices to avert the crisis. The formula worked out by them provided for (a) the restoration of the CWC membership of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Dr. S. D. Sharma, (b) the reference of C. Subramaniam's case for legal opinion, (c) the withdrawal of the requisition by the Prime Minister's side for an AICC meeting, (d) the dropping of the move for a special AICC session in Delhi, and (e) the inclusion of the resolution submitted by the requisitionists in the agenda of the next normal session of the AICC. The syndicate was prepared to take back Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and C. Subramaniam as permanent members, but not Dr. S. D. Sharma. Nijalingappa said if the Prime Minister's group insisted on his taking back the three CWC members as a condition for reaching an agreement, he would insist on a parallel re-instatement of Morarji Desai and other ministers who were dropped from the Cabinet.

6. On the morning of November 1, the Prime Minister telephoned to K. C. Abraham and requested him to attend her meeting. His host in Delhi who was a supporter of the Prime Minister persuaded him to go to the meeting at the Prime Minister's house. But he later left the meeting and went to 7 Janar Manjar Road.

The Chief Ministers' formula came too late. Further, their efforts were wrecked by a new propaganda war between the Prime Minister and the Congress president. They attacked each other with polemical letters, which made the power struggle more bitter. What really wrecked the unity talks was the unauthorized release of Nijalingappa's eight-page letter to the Prime Minister, dated October 28.⁷ In this letter he described her as a "cold, calculating and power-hungry politician, who was resorting to every conceivable form of political deception to promote a personality cult and become a dictator in the name of democratic socialism." He further said: "I cannot readily recall another occasion in the long history of the Indian National Congress when members of the Working Committee wrote a letter⁸ of this kind to the president of the Congress and accused him of acting against the interests of the organization." In another letter to the Prime Minister, he accused her of committing an "unpardonable act of gross indiscipline" in boycotting the meeting of the CWC and organizing a parallel AICC session. He asked her "to renounce the ways of intrigue and deception" and "return to the ways of reason, discipline and democracy."

The Prime Minister challenged Nijalingappa's constitutional and moral right to continue as Congress president after more than fifty per cent of the members of the AICC had denounced him and demanded the election of a new president. She said: "Your demand for an explanation from me confirms the general belief that you and your supporters are bent upon, even at the risk of splitting the party, ousting those who do not see eye to eye with you even though they may represent the majority view of the party. If your intention was to frighten those who differ from you from expressing

7. The cyclostyled copies of the letter were kept ready. But in view of the efforts being made by the Chief Ministers for reaching an agreement, Nijalingappa had asked his secretariat not to release it to the press. But some hot heads in Nijalingappa's camp released without his knowledge a copy of the letter to a newspaper to precipitate the crisis. There was no other alternative open to Nijalingappa except to release it to the press an hour later.

their point of view freely, you will be disappointed." In spite of the personal bitterness injected into the power struggle, both the groups dreaded a total break. Veerendra Patil, the Chief Minister of Mysore, and K. C. Abraham made an attempt to work out a compromise. Their efforts led to a luncheon meeting on November 7 between the Prime Minister and the Congress president. But the luncheon talks between the two reached a dead end even before they had finished the vegetarian meal specially arranged by the Prime Minister for the occasion.

Hope springs eternal in the hearts of men. A fresh effort was made by some Chief Ministers to bridge the widening gulf in the Congress. When Nijalingappa's CWC met at 10 a.m. on November 12, a new compromise formula evolved by C. B. Gupta, Hittendra Desai, and other Chief Ministers was placed before it. The new formula, reportedly agreed to by both the groups, called for (a) the convening of the AICC meeting in Gujarat to review the CWC resolution on organizational elections passed at Faridabad, (b) the future course of action to be decided by the AICC, and (c) the dropping of the requisitioned AICC meeting in Delhi.

As soon as the meeting began, it received a message that unless charges against the Prime Minister were dropped, no compromise was possible. The syndicate members did not agree to this but hoped that the Prime Minister's group would be able to consider the suggestion for parallel concessions. Chavan and V. P. Naik made a last minute effort to avert an open split. From the Prime Minister's house where the CWC of her group was in session, V. P. Naik telephoned S. K. Patil when the syndicate meeting was in progress. While Patil made Naik hang on to the telephone, he consulted his syndicate colleagues. They were in no mood for an understanding, and the response finally communicated to Naik was far from satisfactory to the Prime Minister's group. This was Chavan's last effort at mediation. The time was up for the final act. The hour was five minutes past one o'clock on November 12, 1969. Nijalingappa's CWC unanimously decided to expel the Prime Minister from the party. With the passing of the resolution, the great and powerful Congress of Gandhi and Nehru was

split into two. There were already two CWCs. Two AICCs, two CPPs and two plenary sessions, two Pradesh Congress Committees in every State, and two District Congress Committees soon emerged.

Indira Gandhi summoned a meeting of the CPP on November 13, the very next day after she was expelled from the party. She was given a hero's welcome by the CPP members. Chavan moved a resolution which not only expressed confidence in her leadership but also described her expulsion from the party as invalid and unjustified. He was cheered when he declared that the party stood by Indira Gandhi's leadership and claimed "We are the real Congress." He put the responsibility for the split on Nijalingappa and his supporters and said: "Indeed we made all the effort that was possible for the unity of the party till the last minute.... We have to go through difficult times. What is expected of us is a sense of loyalty to the programme and to the leader."

On November 16, sixty Congress MPs supporting Nijalingappa formed a minority group of the CPP and elected Dr. Ram Subhag Singh as their leader. He had been dropped from the Cabinet a fortnight ago. On November 17 some Congress MPs sat in Parliament in opposition to Congress ministers and voted against the Government on an adjournment motion. The power struggle became hopelessly unequal. The Prime Minister had numbers on her side. She received the support of stragglers who moved towards the power centre. The struggle had already led to the fall of the deputy Prime Minister, three Cabinet ministers, and four junior ministers.

The efforts of the two groups were directed towards capturing as many Pradesh Congress Committees⁹ as possible. When the requisitioned AICC met in Delhi on November 22, over 400 out of the 705 elected members and 52 of the 94 nominated members were present to support the Prime Minister's stand. In an appeal

9. There are 20 Pradesh Congress Committees and 4 territorial committees representing small units like Goa, Pondicherry, Manipur, and Tripura. But the main PCCs which are the source of real power are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Mysore, and West Bengal.

general elections approach, some clear tactics and strategy will emerge. It is not so simple to mobilize popular support. The trends of the by-elections are, of course, there. By and large, Congress has come out very well in these by-elections. This is an indication of the direction in which the wind is blowing. Whether it will continue to blow in the same direction will depend on many factors including when the elections are held."¹²

grammes he had been strongly advocating in the party. His new job was indeed a great challenge, for here was an opportunity for him to work the economic pro-

Ahmed. Affairs to Swaran Singh, and Food to Fakhruddin Ali Defence portfolio was given to Jagjivan Ram, External Cabinet reshuffle announced on June 26, 1970. The Finance, and she herself took over Home in the major The Prime Minister finally persuaded him to accept

eighteen months before the general elections were scheduled to take place. give up Home. He felt Home was a sensitive and prestigious portfolio and there was no need for a change to accept the Finance portfolio. He was reluctant to She met Chavan three times in June to persuade him with her senior colleagues on the changes in the Cabinet. work as Finance Minister. In June 1970 she held talks been able to give sufficient time and attention to her charge of the Finance Ministry for a year but had not the time had come for the reshuffle. She had been in session of Parliament ended in May 1970, she decided reshuffle the Cabinet portfolios. Soon after the budget ment lobbies that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would speculation for many months in the press and in Parliament following the split in the Congress, there was continued

The Finance Minister

forums. In fact, he has been the chief spokesman of the Congress on economic affairs since the Faridabad session of the Congress in 1968. He had drafted the resolution on economic policies adopted by the Bangalore session of the AICC in June 1969. At the Delhi session of the AICC in September 1969 and again at the plenary session of the Congress in Bombay in December 1969, he moved the resolution on economic policy. At Patna, in October 1970 he drafted and moved the economic resolution in the AICC. He made a spirited speech there on economic goals—his first speech in Hindi in the AICC. Even as Home Minister he had given considerable attention to economic issues and had spoken about them extensively.

But mid-1970 was not the best of times to head the Finance Ministry, nor was it the worst of times. The economy was suffering from several ills, including the shortage of raw materials, of industrial capacity, and financial resources. But it was not altogether bleak. India has made progress in the past decade in many spheres. A decade ago the outlook for industry was dreary, agricultural production was lagging, and the imports of American food surplus under the U.S. Public Law (PL) 480¹ seemed to have become a permanent feature. India's economic problems looked insoluble. But by 1970 agricultural production had started looking up, not merely because of a succession of good monsoons but also because of other factors like good fertilizers, irrigation, seed selection, and intensive cultivation. Chavan 'said': "The age-old belief that the Indian farmer is ignorant and unreceptive to new techniques, modes, and methods of production was proved erroneous." According to western observers, "by now the green revolution has become a platitude; already warnings are being sounded about the social tension it can cause as the gap between rich and poor farmers

1. Under the PL 480 Agreement between India and U. S. A., the Government of India credits to the U. S. government's account with the Reserve Bank of India the rupee equivalent of the dollars paid to the U. S. suppliers for goods, principally foodgrains, supplied to India. PL 480 fund held by the U. S. A. in India was approximately Rs. 2,550 crores in January 1971.

grows wider."

In industry the progress was not as marked as in agriculture. But the barriers to progress had been broken and a firm base laid for industrial advance, both in the public and the private sector. The production of steel rose from 1 million tonnes in early 1950s to 5 million tonnes in 1970. The capacity for machine-building rose by 250 per cent, enabling the setting up of many private sector industrial units and giving a new dimension to the economy. The nation has so far invested Rs. 3,800 crores in the public sector units and their share of the production in the large-scale industry is one-eighth. These units have been plagued by strikes, stoppages of work, and managerial inefficiency, but they have acted as the catalyst for industrial progress.

In spite of the advances in many directions, the economy in mid-1970 was under strain. The import of food-grains in 1970-71 for consumption and for maintaining buffer stocks was estimated by the Agricultural Prices Commission to be 10.7 million tonnes, and the shortfall in the procurement of foodgrains was about 3.5 million tonnes. The production of cash crops except sugarcane was poor in 1970. There was severe shortfall in the production of cotton, oilseeds, and jute. The consequent increase in prices had affected production and exports. After becoming Finance Minister, almost the first problem to which Chavan directed his attention was the increase in prices. He told Parliament on August 5, 1970 that no government could afford to be complacent about the rise in prices, as it affected all sections of society, particularly the poorer sections. He admitted that due to shortages of industrial raw materials, "there has been some increase in the general price index for wholesale prices" and assured Parliament that the Government proposed to keep under constant review the price level of all commodities.

The rise in prices continued to engage Chavan's attention. He said: "My major problem now is the stabilisation of prices. This problem in its turn is related to industrial and agricultural

the value of the Indian rupee in relation to international monetary units." He recognized that more than most other fiscal measures, the stabilization of prices was the most important and urgent task before him. He believed that every economic measure should be viewed from the angle of its impact on the maximum number of people, especially those in the weaker sections of society. The Government's measures, including the increase in bank rate from 5 to 6 per cent, credit squeeze and selective credit control in certain commodities like cotton and oilseeds brought down the price index by March end. The Finance Ministry claimed in April 1971 that the price index during the fiscal year ending March 31 went up only by 4 per cent compared to the 7 per cent rise in the previous year.

Holding the price line was an urgent matter, but there were more fundamental problems before Chavan. One of them was the educated unemployed. He 'said': "This is a major problem. I am not forgetting for a moment the more serious problem, that of the vast mass of people who are unemployed in the rural areas. We need to have a massive programme to deal with both rural and the urban unemployment." Since the Government launched the first five-year plan in 1951, 32 million jobs were created till the end of March 1970. Back log of 35 million remains. In 1975 the estimated educated unemployed will be 5 million and rural unemployed 25 million.

In June 1968, when Chavan was Home Minister, he came to grips with this problem and had proposed a 13-point programme to create employment opportunities for engineers.

When he was told that some theoreticians believed that rural unemployment was not as great a danger as urban unemployment, he 'said': "At the present moment, unemployed persons in the rural areas are not equal. They are not organized. In that sense I am prepared to admit that there is a certain urgency and priority for dealing with the problem of educated unemployed. But unlike the urban unemployed, the unemployed people in rural areas have no idea of standards of life, have taken their lot passively. The educated unemployed in the urban area is a rather explosive

material, because it has the capacity to organize. When the educated unemployed goes to rural areas and gives the rural folk new ideas of standards of life and the capacity to organize, there are chances of a serious explosion."

Asked about his basic approach to economic problems, he said: "My economic philosophy is an integrated one and is tied up with social and political implications. We have to see how best, in the given social and political conditions, we can raise new resources, which I feel is the major problem the national economy faces today. We want investment which would ultimately lead to more productive jobs."

When Chavan was asked to what extent the ten-point programme had been implemented, he said: "I think we have initiated action on many of the points. I must say that the ten-point programme by itself does not mean everything. They relate only to what can be done immediately. We have nationalized the major Indian banks and have started moving in the direction of nationalization of import and export trade." The Government has introduced a better land tenure system, and some States have already taken action on it. Curbs have been imposed on monopolies and concentration of economic power. The fixing of ceilings on individual holdings of urban property is under the active consideration of the Government. Legislation to abolish the privileges and privy purses of the princes was introduced. "I realize we have to do a lot more. We depend on the instrumentality of the State Governments for carrying out many of these programmes. The Government will have to be very firm with those who lag behind in implementing land reforms and other measures."

Chavan knew that the working of the nationalized banks was subjected to severe criticism. He said that "it is still a subject of debate, because no definite results have been achieved. One year is too short a period to judge the results of nationalization. The last few months were spent in preparation and at least the matter was before the Supreme Court for some time."

months. I will judge the success of the measure by applying two tests: have we succeeded in providing credit facilities to the small man in agriculture and in the small-scale industries—the neglected sectors, and have we succeeded in creating the banking habit among the rural folk and in mopping up the surplus savings of the rural people? I realize this is no easy task. When the banks reach a new area and start operating there, they do not get results overnight. We have to spread the infra-structure of the banking system in such a way that banking goes to the aid of the people and in return the banks themselves get benefited. We have to give the banks a few years time to show measurable results.”

As soon as he became Finance Minister, he took a close look at India's foreign aid programmes. In the five-year plans the gross foreign aid finance was about one-fifth of the total investment. The balance of four-fifths was financed by internal resources. Foreign aid constituted only 5 per cent of the total investment in the first plan. It jumped to 19 per cent in the second, 24 per cent in the third. In the fourth plan it is estimated at 18 per cent. Chavan 'said': "Our strategy of planned development is not based on large scale dependence on foreign aid. But I would not like to take a dogmatic view that the country can do away altogether with foreign aid. Our dependence on foreign aid will have to be reduced and we will have to be selective in accepting it. In the last two decades the nature of aid we require has changed. We are now pressing for 'untied aid' and a larger share of non-project aid from donor countries and multi-lateral institutions."

Chavan has strong views about the future of PL 480 funds. The rupee accumulations accrued over the last several years have been invested in special securities from which withdrawals can be made only by the mutual consent of the governments of the U.S.A. and India. These accumulations do not thus constitute additional resources. In economic terms these funds have been effectively sterilized. Chavan 'said': "The problem of these accumulated rupee funds has become much more complicated and difficult than what it was at the time the arrangements were agreed upon between the two

Governments. If a satisfactory solution is not found to this problem, perhaps it may remain with us for ever... As I see it, the only way to find a solution to this problem will be to fix a time limit, after which these accumulations should be written off in a phased manner spread over a period of time. A satisfactory plan of disposal must ensure that no undue burden falls on the Indian economy either in terms of inflationary pressure or adverse effect on the balance of payments. At present, a certain portion of the rupee accumulations of PL 480 funds is used for local expenditure of the U.S. embassy in India. This arrangement also cannot go on indefinitely. Some discussions are under way."

Chavan believes that nationalization of banks and abolition of privy purses are only symbolic of the direction in which the economy should move—greater benefits to larger number of people and total abolition of unearned incomes. The interim budget he presented on March 24, 1971 gave indication of these directions. He emphasized the importance of economic growth with social justice and said that his objective would be to "accelerate the process of growth, reduce disparities in income, wealth and economic power, generate employment on a massive scale, and avoid pressures on price or balance of payment of the kind which generate international tensions and increase our dependence on external credit." He said the "economic conditions in the country had been, on the whole, favourable during the past twelve months" and that agricultural growth had been an important factor in the overall growth of the economy. Industrial production was expected to increase roughly 6 per cent during the year, and the improvement would be "shared by capital goods industries as well as important intermediate goods industries. The Finance Minister, however, said that the tempo of industrial production had to increase, and for this purpose the supply of industrial and agricultural raw materials had to be stepped up.

Discussing the economic strategies for the seventh and the main direction in which he hoped to move Chavan answered questions on a large number of important issues. The questions and answers are given below. Q. What is your main economic strategy?

months. I will judge the success of the measure involving two tests: have we succeeded in providing facilities to the small man in agriculture and small-scale industries—the neglected sectors, have we succeeded in creating the banking habit among rural folk and in mopping up the surplus savings of the rural people? I realize this is no easy task. For the banks reach a new area and start operating, they do not get results overnight. We have developed the infra-structure of the banking system in a way that banking goes to the aid of the people and in return the banks themselves get benefited. We have to give the banks a few years time to show desirable results.”

As soon as he became Finance Minister, he took a close look at India's foreign aid programmes. In the first year plans the gross foreign aid finance was about one-fifth of the total investment. The balance of foreign investment was financed by internal resources. Foreign aid constituted only 5 per cent of the total investment in the first plan. It jumped to 19 per cent in the second plan, 25 per cent in the third. In the fourth plan it is expected to be at 18 per cent. Chavan 'said': “Our strategy for economic development is not based on large scale dependence on foreign aid. But I would not like to take a pessimistic view that the country can do away altogether with foreign aid. Our dependence on foreign aid will have to be reduced and we will have to be selective in accepting it. In the last two decades the nature of aid we require has changed. We are now pressing for ‘untied aid’ and a larger share of non-project aid from donor countries and multi-lateral institutions.”

Chavan has strong views about the future of PL 480 funds. The rupee accumulations accrued over the last several years have been invested in special securities from which withdrawals can be made only by the mutual consent of the governments of the U.S.A. and India. These accumulations do not thus constitute additional resources. In economic terms these funds have been effectively sterilized. Chavan 'said': “The problem of these accumulated rupee funds has become much more complicated and difficult than what it was at the time the arrangements were agreed upon between the two

Q. What is your main economic strategy?

Discussing the economic strategies for the seventies and the main direction in which he hoped to move, Chavan answered questions on a large number of important issues. The questions and answers are given:

materials had to be stepped up. Industrial production had to increase, and for this purpose the supply of industrial and agricultural raw The Finance Minister, however, said that the tempo of tries as well as important intermediate goods industries. improvement would be "shared by capital goods industries roughly 6 per cent during the year, and the economy. Industrial production was expected to had been an important factor in the overall growth of the past twelve months" and that agricultural growth the country had been, on the whole, favourable during external credit." He said the "economic conditions in international tensions and increase our dependence on or balance of payment of the kind which generate income, wealth and economic power, generate employment on a massive scale, and avoid pressures on prices "accelerate the process of growth, reduce disparities in social justice and said that his objective would be to He emphasized the importance of economic growth with on March 24, 1971 gave indication of these directions, unearned incomes. The interim budget he presented efforts to larger number of people and total abolition of tion in which the economy should move—greater be- abolition of privy purses are only symbolic of the direc- Chavan believes that nationalization of banks and indefinitely. Some discussions are under way." embassy in India. This arrangement also cannot go on PL 480 funds is used for local expenditure of the U.S. sent, a certain portion of the rupee accumulations of or adverse effect on the balance of payments. At pre- Indian economy either in terms of inflationary pressures disposal must ensure that no undue burden falls on the spread over a period of time. A satisfactory plan of accumulations should be written off in a phased manner problem will be to fix a time limit, after which these ... As I see it, the only way to find a solution to this this problem, perhaps it may remain with us for ever. Governments. If a satisfactory solution is not found to

A. The war we are waging against poverty, disease and illiteracy is no less bitter than a real war. It requires a greater degree of sweat and toil. And like a military war, this war calls for mass participation and popular fervour.

Q. Have the five-year plans succeeded in their objectives?

A. The progress achieved so far has to be related to the conditions which existed when planning began. What we inherited from our erstwhile rulers was an economy largely geared to war production and in urgent need of repair. Even the major industries—textile, jute, sugar, and cement—were in need of substantial reconstruction at that time. We have made progress in some measure. During the last two decades our food production has nearly doubled. New industrial units have been set up, cutting down dependence on imports of industrial goods. We have impressive achievements. And yet I realize there is growing dissatisfaction among large masses of people about inadequate growth and imbalances and about uneven distribution of the gains.

Q. In the last few years regional imbalances in development have been highlighted by political agitations. What steps have the Government taken to rectify these imbalances?

A. Several measures have been taken to provide direct assistance on easier terms for the setting up of industrial projects in less developed areas. The Industrial Development Bank of India extends direct loans to industrial units for specified backward districts at the concessional rate of 7 per cent against the normal rate of 8 per cent interest. There are also concessions about the period of repayment, lower commitment charge on the undrawn balance of the loan, and liberal underwriting facilities. Under the new licensing policy, measures have been announced to liberalize the licensing of new entrepreneurs in the lower and middle range, and restrictions have been put on big, dominant monopoly houses.

Q. Critics have pointed out that some of the economic measures taken by the Government are ill-conceived, irrational and at best offer only 'ad hoc' solutions to meet immediate political requirements.

A. There are many. Employment and education require immediate attention. Educational facilities have increased and there is today a large reservoir of unemployed, trained man-power. Naturally frustration and anger are generated. In addition to the educated unemployed, there are millions in the countryside who are either unemployed or under-employed. The first priority, therefore, is to find jobs for everyone. Jobs for millions must be the cornerstone of our economic strategy for the seventies. This is not a problem of mere economic logic, but also one of the compelling human connotations. We have to have better utilization of labour-intensive techniques of production, adoption of modern technologies to suit our requirements, and a

Q. Which areas, according to you, require urgent action?

A. The process of planning in a totalitarian society and in a democratic framework is different. No planning is possible in an atmosphere of violence, frustration, and tension. If the seventies are to be a decade of economic growth, it will also have to be a decade of peace. In every changing society there are bound to be conflict of values, clash of interests, and resistance to change. Caste prejudices, antagonism based on religious beliefs still persist in India, and they come in bold relief when there is a clash of economic interests. Unhindered efforts are made to smoothen out these conflicts in a pragmatic way with the consent of the people—I repeat, with the consent of the people—it will be difficult to plan for any length of time, difficult to spoon-feed anyone.

Q. Do you feel economic planning has its limitations in a democratic set up in which conflicting interests clamour for attention?

A. As I said earlier, if any economic planning is to be successful, it should receive the willing co-operation of the people for whose benefit it is meant. There are certainly political considerations that weigh with any government and it is unfair to say that the measures are dictated by purely political objectives. The social, economic and historical background in which development is to be attempted cannot be forgotten. Political considerations are no less important.

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greater degree of emphasis on small scale, cottage and agro-based industries. We also have to re-orient our educational policies to suit the job requirements not only of government but also of agriculture, commerce, and other sectors. We have accepted a massive employment programme to provide at least half a million jobs by the end of 1971. This is just a beginning.

Q. How do you hope to reduce the glaring disparities in incomes and wealth in a vast country like India?

A. Inequalities of wealth have increased over the decades, and are very sharp today. Those who had the initial advantage of ownership of assets including land were able to march ahead of others. The process of growth by its very nature brings about inequalities. But we cannot take a complacent view of this phenomenon. This is a complex and intricate question with far-reaching implications in terms of motivation to work, save, and invest. A purely ideological or doctrinaire approach will not help us. Efforts spread over several years will be necessary. The prosperity of a few at the cost of millions of under-fed, under-clad, and under-employed persons will not create a stable society.

Q. You have given a general approach to the problem of disparities. I would ask you in particular about the disparities in incomes and wealth in the rural areas and the steps the Government has in mind to meet this situation.

A. The green revolution has changed the nature of the land problem. At one time the gap between the rich and the poor was confined primarily to urban and industrial areas. Now the green revolution and the prosperity of a section of the rural society have created inequalities and consequent frustration in the rural sections also. If the frustration is treated as a mere law and order problem without removing the basic causes, the green revolution may not long remain green. This sums up my assessment of the problem of the rural areas. As for the solution, during the last two decades many legislative measures, as sound and progressive as those in the most advanced countries in the world, have been introduced. But the basic task of translating these measures into action is still incomplete. The State governments now recognize the importance of immediate

action and in the next couple of years stern measures will have to be taken to implement the laws.

Q. Is there anything your Government can do to accelerate the process of land reforms in the States? What as the Government of India done in the centrally-administered areas and what did the Government do in the States which were under President's rule when you were Home Minister?

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Q. What is the rationale behind land ceilings?

A. In India a variety of tenurial practices have persisted over generations and there have been differences in the climatic factors also. Therefore, it is difficult to think of a uniform standard for the purpose of land ceiling. However, if the land hunger of the large masses of landless people in the rural areas is to be satisfied, land ceiling will have to be imposed on the basis of the family as the unit.

Q. You have said many development schemes in the rural sector have benefited the well-to-do sections of farmers and no impact has been made on the lives of the small cultivator and the landless labourer. How do you hope to change this situation?

A. Yes, there is nothing more frustrating for the small cultivator than to see others benefit by the green revolution and to have no share in it, to see and hear about it without being able to participate in it. This

has become the lot of the small farmer in recent years. The disparities in the levels of income and production will get further accentuated and sharpened in future, if measures like dry farming techniques are not taken to stop this. I feel this is an explosive area and should get urgent attention. The small cultivator requires special attention. Ceiling on land and distribution of surplus land are the first steps I would recommend. Special assistance to small farmers will also have to be given.

Q. What about disparities in the urban areas?

A. The impact of any measure like ceiling on urban property must be judged not only in terms of resources for development but also in its value in creating a psychological atmosphere. The logic of such a measure is not in dispute, and I referred to it at the Patna session of the AICC. In our future policies and programmes for the 70s we will certainly have to act on limiting urban property holdings.

Q. Some theoreticians have questioned the wisdom of mixing up social justice with economic justice. What are your views?

A. Yes, there are some who say that the moment politicians stop talking of the distribution of social justice and concentrate on problems of growth, all would be well. They say people are merely interested in bettering their lot and not in the abstract concept of social justice. I disagree with them. I feel people are concerned not only about their immediate well being but also about their relative position in society. As a matter of fact, what causes inflation in advanced industrial countries is not so much the shortage of goods as the mad struggle between different classes and groups to shift the distribution of income in their favour. When workers demand increased wages beyond what is justified in terms of their productivity, when farmers or manufacturers ask for increased returns out of proportion to their needs, or even when the government increases its share in the total national income, a struggle ensues. The results are increase in prices and imbalances. A price-income-wage policy is nothing more, nothing less than a policy by which the government arbitrates between the various claimants for a larger

share of the national cake. Therefore, a conscious production and distribution policy which will mix economic justice with social justice is necessary.

Q. While what you say may hold good in fairly advanced industrialized societies, do you think your position applies to India where extreme poverty and inequalities exist?

A. The need for fundamental change in both the social and economic structures is greater in India than in affluent societies. We have to start with finding employment for all. This is not such a pressing problem in industrially advanced countries. We certainly also have to remove the barriers of caste and creed and alter the laws relating to inheritance and other social inequalities, so that there will be a better chance for the economic laws to work.

Q. Have you given any thought to the question of fixing a flooring and a ceiling on incomes?

A. A simplistic solution is for fixing the maximum as a certain multiple of the minimum. But this would be an unreal approach. We must know what is the minimum income we want to ensure to every individual. I am all in favour of a ceiling on income. But what is of greater relevancy to us in India is to define the minimum level of income, wealth and standard of living. Q. Some economists point out that the basic requirement is increased production.

A. This is true up to a point. But the larger goals of the economic policy should be to bring about both growth and production. Unless the size of the national income itself increases, the efforts to ensure a minimum standard of living for everyone will be frustrated, and all talks of levelling of incomes would be futile. Rapid growth and higher production should also imply adequate incentive to work, save, and invest. We cannot think in terms of incentives for the well-to-do and the affluent only. Incentives for all sections of society have to be given importance. Increased production without fair distribution of wealth will be meaningless for the millions.

Q. What should be the role of the government in economic growth?

A. The government is an important entity which in

a democratic system embodies the hopes and aspirations of the people. The government has to discharge its responsibilities towards the neglected sections of society and has to have its share of the national income. A certain portion of the increased income and wealth has to be assigned to the public exchequer by way of levies, savings, and taxes. The government cannot discharge its obligations unless its position is strengthened by getting sufficient assignment of national revenues to it.

Chavan's answers reveal his basic ideas on the goal of combining economic development with social justice and reflect his background of Royist thinking and assimilation of modern ideas on economic growth. Although he soars high in the stratosphere of economic theories, he is down-to-earth and pragmatic when it comes to dealing with particular issues. He 'said': "What I have stated is essentially a macro-analysis. Micro-implications of it have to be spelt out in terms of specific targets. I have only given a framework for sustained economic growth over the next ten years. The economic strategy for the 70s, as indeed for the 80s, requires a long-term view." The most urgent and fundamental task before the Finance Minister, as indeed before the Government, is the removal of poverty. The slogan 'garibi hatao' that the Congress adopted in its election campaign in 1971 highlighted the task and promised a new life to the people.

1. On June 2, 1970.

In August 1970 he suggested to his colleagues that fresh elections should be held as early as possible. In September he is believed to have told the Prime Minister that the Congress stood to gain by going to the polls without delay. But the Prime Minister's advisers as well as Jagjivan Ram, the Congress president, were against a mid-term poll. Chavan's insistence on fresh elections was interpreted by some Congress leaders as a bid to increase his hold and as a trap. Indira Gandhi did not commit herself but watched the trends in the by-elections to the State legislatures and the Lok Sabha possibility at all."

I have any indication of it. But I don't rule out this possibility of elections to the Lok Sabha in 1971—not that—whether in 1972 or 1971. I do not rule out the possibility of elections to the Lok Sabha in 1971—not that majority would depend on when the elections are held the Congress coming back to power with an increased two is far off, nearly two years ahead. The chances of policies of the Congress. He said: "Nineteen seventy- enable the Government to implement the economic fresh mandate from the people would be necessary to general elections in March 1971—Chavan felt that a As for back as June 1970—nine months before the Fifth

Nineteen Seventy-One

before taking a decision.

In the nine by-elections held after the split in the Congress, the new Congress contested seven seats and won five, whereas Nijalingappa's Congress did not win a single seat. These results were from areas as far away as the Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala. Chavan 'said': "In these by-elections, by and large, the Congress did very well. This was an indication of the direction in which the wind was blowing." He wanted early elections so that his party could take advantage of the psychological shift of the voters in its favour after the nationalization of the major banks and the Government's decision to abolish the privy purses.

The political situation in India in 1970 was confused, and naturally every political leader was cautious about a mid-term poll. The Government felt that in the new political climate that had developed after the split in the Congress, Parliament did not fully reflect the will of the people. There was mounting criticism of the Government by the rightist parties in Parliament over the decision to abolish the privy purses, the nationalization of the banks, and over the Government's alliance with leftist parties. The leftist forces also raised their strident voice of protest against the Government, demanding immediate radical economic measures.

Asked about the reasons that compelled him to demand an early poll, Chavan 'said': "The general political developments in the last couple of years and some judicial interpretations of the Constitution created a feeling of helplessness. We, therefore, thought that we should get a fresh mandate from the people. Further, the feeling that we had to depend on other parties and consult them before taking decisions thwarted the Government's initiative. A third reason was that we did not want to give more time to the rightist forces to consolidate themselves. I believe these are the reasons that weighed with us in taking the decision. It was our judgment that this was the appropriate time to hold the elections."²

In December 1969 Morarji Desai, Nijalingappa, Sanjiva

2. In interview on February 18, 1971.

Reddi, and S. K. Pati had decided to hold negotiations with the Swatantra and the Jan Sangh for an electoral alliance on the basis of a minimum programme. But the talks did not materialize as a result of the stiff opposition to the move from the younger elements in the old Congress. Morarji Desai, standing aloof in tragic grandeur and devoured by the all-consuming passion to defeat the Government, did not give up his efforts to form an alliance. In early June 1970 he held talks with Balraj Madhok, the Jan Sangh leader, and M. R. Masani, the chairman of the Swatantra Party. The three of them agreed on a draft programme of joint action which Desai was to recommend to the AICC meeting of the old Congress later in the month. When the old AICC met at the end of June, it passed a resolution appealing to other political parties to consolidate "national democratic forces to repel the threat of communist subversion and communal bias." It laid down a platform on which like-minded parties could form a "grand alliance" to bring down the Government.

In May 1970, before the old AICC decided to form the alliance, Chavan said: "It is quite possible they (the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party) will have some sort of a common link, evolve an electoral alliance in future with the idea of forming a government." He was the first to sense the potential danger posed by the "grand alliance" to the Congress, and thought the best way to forestall it was to hold fresh elections. When the executive of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee met on July 3, 1970, it passed a resolution asking Congress members to be prepared to fight the "unholy alliance of the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra that is in the offing." Chavan, who was present at the meeting, said that "the grand alliance was more dangerous to peace than the naxalite activities." A fortnight before the end of the winter session of Parliament in December 1970, the Prime Minister took the decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha and order fresh elections. She kept the opposition parties and even some of her colleagues guessing about her intention till the CWC met in the third week of December and requested the Government to order fresh elections. On the advice of the Government, on December 27 the

President of India dissolved the Lok Sabha and called for fresh elections in March 1971.

When the announcement of the mid-term poll came, the opposition parties received a severe jolt. A week before the announcement, some of them had petitioned the President not to dissolve the Lok Sabha. The parties were forestalled from mounting a major attack on the Government and the ruling Congress, because the gap between the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the start of the poll was short. The disturbances that marked the pre-election scene in 1967, when a large procession of 'sadhus' had marched to Parliament House when the Jan Sangh had appealed to the religious sentiments of the voters over the alleged atrocities committed by the Congress government on the poor 'sadhus' were missing in 1970.

When the poll was announced in December 1970, the picture of India that was projected in the newspaper columns in India and abroad was that of a divided nation, riven by dissensions and macabre political manoeuvres, standing on the brink of instability. The Times,³ London in a three-column headline told the world a week before the mid-term poll: "The pre-election violence and murders threaten to extinguish parliamentary democracy in India." The paper said that the "last nail has been hammered into the coffin of India's system of democracy in the country's most troubled and tragic State of West Bengal." The newspapers in India were no less pessimistic. 'The statesman,' 'The Indian Express,' 'The Hindu' and many other newspapers saw a rotten state of affairs in India and no hope of a stable government emerging after the elections. They said the Congress was doomed. Judging from the newspapers, it looked as though the future in India had gone underground in a retrograde motion towards primitive politics. The Government wanted to deemphasize caste and regional politics and, therefore, delinked Lok Sabha elections from the elections to the State legislatures. The Congress hoped to highlight national issues and prevent local, provincial, and sectarian interests clouding them. The elections to the

legislatures of three of the eighteen States were, however, held along with the Lok Sabha poll. West Bengal and Orissa, which were under President's rule, went to the polls to elect members to the State assemblies as well as to the Lok Sabha. In spite of having a clear majority, the DMK government in Tamil Nadu also decided to have a mid-term poll.

The prophets of doom feared that instability and violence would increase after the elections and that in West Bengal the voters would not be able to exercise their franchise in peace. The leaders of the "Grand Alliance" hoped that the people's alleged disgust with the Government's inability to curb violence and their desire for a change of government would help them to increase their strength in Parliament. The Congress leaders pinned their faith on the desire of the people for a stable government at the Centre, for a socialist, secular India. The party received encouragement when some important leaders of Nijalingappa's Congress, including his own party's general secretary and State ministers in Mysore and Gujarat, defected to the Congress. Another development that demoralized the old Congress was the result of the by-election to the U.P. legislature from Maniram, in which T. N. Singh, the U.P. Chief Minister, received a humiliating defeat at the hands of a Congress candidate.

The Congress as well as the other political parties knew that the 1971 poll was not a conventional one and could not be fought with pedantic manifestos and slogans. They realized that the appeal to the voters would have to be not only on the basis of caste but also on economic issues. Even the Jan Sangh made promises of economic prosperity to the poorer sections of society and its manifesto spoke of the establishment of a socialist society. The election manifesto of the Congress, in the drafting of which Chavan had a hand in the final stages, was a brief and moderate document. It did not spell out in detail the progressive policies the party wanted to pursue.⁴ It said the Congress recognized that the general elections in 1967 registered the people's impatient Congress candidate.

4. Indira Gandhi admitted in an interview to the Press Trust of India on March 3, 1971 that the Congress manifesto "is on a low key, because we wanted to say only what we can do."

ence with the slow pace of progress in India.

By choosing the time of the poll the Congress had secured a head-start over the other parties, but the opposition parties were happy that the Congress did not make use of this advantage. The names of the Congress candidates were announced very late only by the end of January and some names even in February—after most other parties had announced their candidates. When the old Congress filed a case in the Supreme Court of India, contesting the award of the symbol of yoked bullocks to the Congress by the Election Commission, the Congress leaders gave no serious thought to an alternative symbol. The CPB took a week to finalize the new election symbol (cow and calf), print new posters, and replace the old ones already distributed. The Congress manifesto was released after the manifestos of almost all other parties were published. The party took a long time to decide that it would have no alliances with other parties at the national level but would only go in for adjustment of seats at the State level with the CPI, the Muslim League, the DMK, and other parties. There was a virtual wrangle between Jagjivan Ram, the Congress president, who disapproved of any alliance with the CPI, and others who favoured closer alliance with it at the national level. Due to the inefficient handling of the talks for adjustment of seats, the Congress had to concede to the DMK more Lok Sabha seats and forgo the chance of contesting any assembly seat in Tamil Nadu. The organization of the Congress was in a flux. It had no properly-constituted State and district committees in many parts of India. All these factors gladdened the "grand alliance." But it did not take into account two distinct advantages the Congress had. It had the image of a party committed to help the poor and the down-trodden, the minorities and the harijans, a party which was against the princes and the monopolists. It had Indira Gandhi, a young, dynamic leader, a symbol of hope to millions of people.

The main themes of the speeches of the Congress leaders during the election campaign were the supreme importance of having a stable government at the Centre, the danger posed by the four-party alliance to progress, and the need to strengthen Indira Gandhi's hands in her

not make adjustments with other parties for fighting the poll by giving up its ideals and programmes, although in 1967 he had formed a grand alliance of parties (including the Muslim League) with divergent views to defeat the Congress in Kerala. The CPI (M) manifesto demanded that the Constitution of India should go lock, stock, and barrel and should be replaced by a new one enshrining the sovereignty of the people in place of the sovereignty of vested interests. The main plank of the CPI (M) in the West Bengal assembly elections was a six-point demand for the widest possible autonomy for the State.

The poll was held from March 1 to 10 amidst widespread fears that it would be marred by violence. There was a spurt of violent demonstrations and political murders, with West Bengal claiming the lion's share. Over 2,291 violent pre-election incidents took place, six States accounting for 93 percent of them.⁶ Chavan 'said' that considering the magnitude of the political exercise India went through, with 272 million voters and 518 constituencies, "these incidents raised no serious doubts on the efficient working of the poll machinery and indeed of democracy in India."

Confounding the pollsters, the press, and the politicians—and even the jaundiced astrologers—the people voted back to power the Congress with a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. It secured 350 seats out of the 516 for which results were announced in March.⁷ The Congress leaders, including Indira Gandhi, Chavan and Jagjivan Ram, as well as leaders of the grand alliance shared the surprise. About 3.3 million fewer people than in the last elections exercised their franchise—despite an increase of 24 million in the electorate—bringing down the percentage of votes polled from 46.62 in 1967 to 56.62 in 1971. The Congress secured 36.64 per cent of votes polled, against the 40.1 per cent in 1967. The 'left of centre' stand adopted by it brought

6. West Bengal topped the list with 1,017 incidents. Three candidates belonging to the Forward Bloc, the Bangla Congress, and Congress (O) were murdered in West Bengal. Second in the list was Tamil Nadu with 370 incidents. Bihar and Kerala registered 18 incidents each, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 113 and Andhra Pradesh with 104.

7. Elections for the remaining seats were held later.

rich dividends by enlarging its strength at the expense of not only the right but also the left. The Congress recaptured the metropolitan cities of Bombay and Delhi and increased its hold in Madras, Calcutta, and many other cities.

The old Congress secured 10.56 per cent and won 16 seats. The Jan Sangh, which had 35 members in the fourth Lok Sabha, got only 22 seats. The Swatantra slid down from 44 to 8, the SSP from 23 to 3. The 'grand alliance' was routed. The people rejected the curious amalgam of the ultra-nationalism of the Jan Sangh, the feudalism of the Swatantra, the lower middle-class, militant parochialism of the SSP, and the vague socialism of the old Congress with a liberal admixture of anti-communism. The PSP secured 2 seats against the 13 it held in the previous Lok Sabha.⁸

The only party other than the Congress which gained in the elections was the CPI (M), which increased its strength from 19 to 25. Chavan said: "The left is still strong. After the Congress, the CPI (M) is the largest party in Parliament. It is the real left. I would wait and see how the party functions, before giving an opinion on the CPI (M)'s influence." Although the percentage of votes polled by the CPI in 1971 was less than in 1967, it managed to secure 23 seats—the same number as in the previous Lok Sabha. The regional parties, except the DMK and the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS), were cut down to size. The DMK won a big victory, defeating Kamaraj's old Congress in Tamil Nadu legislature. The BKD secured 1 seat against the 10 it held in the previous Lok Sabha. The Akali Dal which had three seats got none. The people's verdict was very clear.

The old Congress which was the main opposition in the fourth Lok Sabha slipped down from the first position to the fifth, while the CPI (M) advanced from the fifth to the first as the main opposition. In Kerala and West Bengal the percentage of votes polled by the CPI (M) was more than that received by the Congress. In

8. Chavan said on April 7, 1971: "Both the SSP and the PSP have succeeded in liquidating themselves by their negative approach and by the abstract manner in which they functioned, divorced from realities."

all the other States the percentage was in favour of the Congress.

The monolithic hold of the Congress on Maharashtra voters was demonstrated when the party secured 43 out of 44 seats contested by it in the State. Chavan won from the Satara constituency by a margin of 1,71,000 votes, improving his lead over his rival in the last election. The most pathetic defeat was that of the Shiv Sena, which not only lost its hold but also its reputation. The "paper tiger" was exposed—at least for the moment. The Shiv Sena supporters had tried to disturb election meetings addressed by Chavan in Bombay, and its members had shouted into Chavan's face "Shiv Sena zindabad" and "Chavan chale jao." After the elections, Chavan 'said':⁹ "The Shiv Sena has given me another challenge." At a rally on March 12 in Bombay, Bal Thackeray declared that Chavan had done great harm to Maharashtra and that the Shiv Sena would not allow him to hold a meeting in Shivaji Park. Chavan 'said': "I am going there tomorrow to hold a meeting at Shivaji Park. I must take up the challenge. My main opposition comes from the Shiv Sena in Bombay. Its leader has declared that the Prime Minister would be a Hitler and that the Shiv Sena would rise again. Shivaji Park is a peculiar area, where the Jan Sangh has a strong influence. People are not prepared for 'mara mari' (fights) though they would quietly go and cast their votes." To take up the Shiv Sena's challenge, Chavan flew to Bombay in a cargo plane, as the Indian Airlines was on strike. He spoke at a victory rally in Shivaji Park which was attended by over three lakh people, in spite of the Shiv Sena's call to the people to boycott the meeting.

Asked about the reasons for the massive Congress victory, Chavan 'said': "A sort of hope was created in the minds of the people as a result of what has happened during the last couple of years. Our efforts to move forward, towards a new economic horizon created a feeling in the minds of the people that the leadership of the Congress should be supported. The people also felt that the alliance against the Congress was a negative force, trying to block the path towards progress.

9. On March 13, 1971.

10. Since the Congress first started losing its monopoly of power in 1967, nearly half of the eighteen States have been ruled by non-Congress coalition governments. Only one of them—in Tamil Nadu under the DMK—could keep its alliance intact.

The return of Indira Gandhi with a big majority was hailed by the press and the public with enthusiasm. On March 15 'Tass', the Soviet official news agency, welcomed the election verdict as "a great success for that has helped the Congress most.

scientists to explain—his belief in orderly progress approach of the average Indian—frustrating for political other reasons may be, perhaps it is this philosophical sense of peace, security, and stability. Whatever the offers them some hope of change without upsetting their dignity are prepared to go along with the party which sought in the thinking of the Indian people who ev- The basic reason for the Congress victory should be could have foreseen its emergence as a powerful force. majority in the Lok Sabha in the elections. No one party and did not have a remote chance to get a clear A year and a half ago the Congress was a discredited

positive results were achieved. during the last ten or fifteen years of Congress rule no attitude that had developed as a result of the fact that In 1967 they had taken advantage of the anti-Congress Chavan 'said': "It is not difficult to explain their defeat. About the defeat of the Jan Sangh, especially in Delhi, and the Muslims solidly supported the Congress."

sections of the people, the minorities, the Christians, was the third reason. The backward people, the poorer experiment of having a coalition at the Centre. This people were not prepared to run the risk of making an behaviour of political parties in the coalitions. The States which have unstable coalitions,¹⁰ have seen the They have seen and experienced what happens in the need for a solid and stable government at the Centre. important factor is that the people have realized the a national leader. Both these were there. A third to succeed—one a major national issue, and the other of hope. In any general elections we need two things for the Prime Minister, and she became the symbol the slogan 'garibi hatao'. This created a new image in fact, what caught the imagination of the people was

the supporters of the policy of peace and social progress pursued by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.... The election returns show that Indira Gandhi's programme of social and economic reforms has the support of the broad mass of people." 'The New York Times' paid a lefthanded compliment when it said: "The nightingale has roared. It remains to be seen if she can fly. This personal triumph, cutting across regional, religious and caste lines offers the Prime Minister an unprecedented opportunity to reverse India's dangerous drift towards division and despair." Newspapers in India and abroad which had predicted nothing but division and despair for India changed their tune and went into ecstasies about the stability and the strength of the Indian democratic system. Some of them suddenly realized that in the whole of south-east Asia, only India had a stable government.

Chavan believes that the overwhelming majority received by the Congress in the Lok Sabha is by itself no guarantee that the Congress would be able to redeem its pledges to the people and give a stable government. Asked whether the Congress had not given high hopes to the people and whether it would be able to fulfil them, he 'said': "Yes, we have made promises. We shall not run away from them. Hopes have been created, because there are problems to be solved. We want to come to grips with them. How far we succeed is a different matter—something in the womb of the future. But we shall try to redeem the pledges."

He said the two urgent problems before the Government were to hold the price line and solve the unemployment problem. "Indeed the biggest problem is the general poverty of the people and the glaring social and economic disparities and imbalances." He realized that tall promises unmatched by performance can bring disillusionment and said that "in an era of rising expectations generated not merely because of the promises made by the politicians but by the very nature of modern living, there is bound to be frustration. It will be our effort to remove it."

but never of being flamboyant or arrogant. Asked about his philosophy of life, he said: "I don't know how to describe it. My thinking has been influenced

is today and what he is not could be traced to them. Those who know him at close quarters see in him that rare combination of a man of idealism with a pragmatic outlook. Like Nehru, he is a great neutral, and his mind always probes for peaceful solutions of disputes. The elder politicians in the Congress and even in the other parties respect his views, while the younger generation of Congressmen look to him for support. His friends and foes alike see in him a man of charming manners of great humility. His critics accuse him of many sins.

The events which shaped Chavan and those which he shaped are too close to permit a fair assessment of his achievements or failures. He has passed only the mid-point of his political career and a final assessment will have to wait. However, his sources of strength, his weaknesses, the dominant influences on him, and his philosophy of life could be evaluated from the record of his past activities. The key to his success has to be sought in his personal qualities, his integrity, sincerity, and devotion to the causes he holds dear. His humble beginning, his early experience of the poverty and misery of his people have left their stamp on him. What he is today and what he is not could be traced to them.

The Future

ed by many currents of thought and by my many experiences. My philosophy is essentially a philosophy of action.... I do not think there is anything like a personal God, although I recognize there is some power above us. I spend a few minutes in meditation every morning, and in that sense I am not an atheist. But what I really believe in are human values." Asked to elaborate on these values, he 'said': "I believe in human goodness, not in the goodness of inaction, not in the peace of renunciation. I believe in the goodness of thought, word, and deed. I believe in the effort to be good. I know good is a vague, relative term. But there are certain attitudes of mind and actions which could be qualified as good. Even political agitation, individual or collective effort to do good is a goal in itself."

His mind refuses to compartmentalize people on religious grounds and he is too tolerant of other faiths to be partial to his own. When the Marxist-led united front ministry in Kerala formed a Muslim-majority district (Malappuram) as a concession to the Muslim League which was a constituent of the front, Chavan told Parliament that there was intrinsically nothing wrong with a Muslim-majority district. "I am sure that the Kerala government will also look into the administrative aspect of it. We should not have the feeling that merely because a new Muslim-majority district is created, it is against the interest of national security." During the formation of Meghalaya State, some of his close associates and leaders in Assam had told him that Meghalaya would become a Christian State. He rejected the objection and found no reason to deny Statehood to the people of the area merely because most of them were Christians.

Chavan has leavened the Congress with his liberal, socialist outlook and has stood by those elements in the party which are for radical social and economic changes. His considerable weight in the Congress has helped the party to shape its policies and programmes to be in tune with the aspirations of the weaker sections of society. As Home Minister he withstood the pressures of the extremists of the rightist and the leftist parties and upheld the federal character of India. He met the onslaughts of communal and divisive forces and brought

As Defence Minister he helped the armed forces to expand and become self-sufficient. If today New Delhi and other sensitive areas are guarded every minute, day and night by a complex of the most sophisticated missiles, a large part of the credit for this should go to Chavan. If the Indian armoured corps is today a match for any in Asia, if the MI is now far better than what it was in 1962, Chavan has a big share in this achievement.

Chavan has sometimes compromised his desire for quick and radical changes with his belief in democratic procedure. Asked whether he thought radical economic changes could be achieved within the framework of the present democratic set up, he said: "I believe it can be done. It is the only choice before us, the only path other than that of strife and disintegration." About delays in the democratic procedures, he said: "They are to some extent inherent in the system, but are not unavoidable. We have to cut these delays and long procedures. The Government will have to take suitable measures to do this. I know the present system gives us slow results. I know too that ours is a race against time. Therefore, we are determined to find solutions to the major problems we face and to achieve substantial results. We have to do this in a decade at the outside. I believe the seventies is a decade of destiny for India." Chavan is essentially the expression of a new class of politicians who have none of the inhibitions of the western-educated intelligentsia—the expression of a new class of national leaders who have graduated from State politics and come to the national level. He is a good example of how native shrewdness, vision, and dogged perseverance can succeed. His attitude of mind is influenced by western thinking and knowledge of the western classics on political science, economics, philosophy, and sociology. But he remains Indian in his personal life. He likes Indian dress and Indian food. It will be difficult to imagine Chavan in western clothes. In the company of guests he would perhaps use fork and knife at the table, but would much rather prefer to throw them off and eat with his fingers. He likes to eat from "kash" and "katoris" rather than from plates. He is a strict teetotal.

taller, but is not squeamish about seeing others drink or smoke. Unlike some of his Cabinet colleagues and even junior ministers, he does not expect secretaries and other officers to put out cigarettes and straighten neck ties before entering his presence.

What is his own vision of India? "I think India of the future should be a country which is economically and politically stable, which has no social inequalities, and is capable of protecting her own sovereignty, giving full economic contentment to the people with opportunity for growth. My vision of India is that of a strong nation, playing its constructive role in contributing to world peace. If I may put it differently, India of the future will be a strong, socialist, democratic, secular nation, making her positive contribution towards establishing a peaceful community of nations." In the India of his vision, he also sees the growth and fulfilment of cultural values, of art, and literature—the flowering of the Indian genius. Literature, music, and art should flourish with no inhibition and enrich the life of the people. He is in close touch with literary currents in India and 'said': "There is a new form of poetry emerging in India, a completely new generation of poets with a new medium. It reflects the protest, concealed frustration, and anger of our youth. It is a new trend. I, however, find that in many Indian languages the previous generation of poets still reign supreme—the generation which wrote in praise of social changes and of the freedom struggle. I want both the trends to develop and contribute to a fuller and richer India."

Chavan is fifty-eight and his future—and for that matter, even of Indira Gandhi who is fifty-four—is in the hands of this new generation. He is today firmly entrenched as the principal deputy to the Prime Minister. This equation of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister and Chavan as principal deputy seems durable and should work well for the nation. Whether Chavan reaches the summit or not is of no serious consequence to India or perhaps even to him. What is of consequence is that his services should continue to be available to his party and to the people.

